

A QUIET LIFE?
Anything but
Hellraiser Keith
Allen on his
latest TV role

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NEEDS A
GOOD DOCTOR**
Can Martin Sixsmith
spin her out of trouble?

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IS TOLD TO STOP
WORRYING...**
...by the author of the
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**FOLLOWING
THE FULL MONTY**
The hit film's writer
reveals his
next project

INDEPENDENT

Monday 2 March 1998 45p No 3,547

Labour to put up prescriptions

Exclusive

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

PRESCRIPTION charges will be raised by 15p to £5.80 from April despite unrest on the Labour back benches over government proposals to reform the welfare state.

It is the first increase in prescription charges since

Labour came to power last May and is likely to lead to criticism that the charge is now so high that it is hitting those on low incomes who do not qualify for exemptions.

Labour repeatedly attacked the Tories for raising prescription charges as a "tax on the sick" throughout their 18 years in office from 20p to its present level of £5.65.

Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, is hoping the

criticism of the increase will be muted as it is below the 3.6 rate of inflation, and in line with last year's 15p increase by the Tories.

The rise in prescription charges under pressure from the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, will intensify the pressure on Mr Dobson to sweeten the pill by announcing the restoration of free eye-tests and free dental check-ups in the summer after a fundamental review of all

NHS charges—which are a highly sensitive issue for the Government.

Labour avoided making any pledges to cut prescription charges in its general election manifesto, after abandoning earlier commitments to abolish them, but Mr Dobson ran into flak last year when he was unable to rule out new charges because of the comprehensive review.

The review will be looking at

cutting the exemptions to prescription charges, which include all pensioners, those on income support, those receiving jobseeker's allowance, children and pregnant women.

Better-off pensioners could be required to pay for prescriptions, which may be means-tested and limited to those who are on low incomes.

Ministers have privately ruled out introducing charges for visiting the GP, although it

was supported by a majority of family doctors in an attempt to cut out time-wasting by patients. Also ruled out are hospital "hotel" charges to pay for bed and food.

Mr Dobson said Labour would not break its manifesto pledge to provide health care "available to all, according to need, free at the point of use". Charging for visits to the doctor would have broken that promise.

Charges are an important part of the NHS budget. The prescription charge raises around £310m a year, but is heavily outweighed by the bill for free prescriptions, which amounts to around £1.3bn. Around 80 per cent of all prescriptions are free, because they are covered by exemptions.

There will also be fears among patients' groups that increasing the charge could encourage more prescription

fraud. Alan Milburn, the health minister, has announced a crackdown on prescription charge fraud which is costing the National Health Service an estimated £100m a year, but it has now emerged that the majority of the fraud is caused by patients claiming they are on income support. This may suggest that they cannot afford the charges, even though they do not qualify for free prescriptions.

Leading article, page 16

Army major accused of spying for the Serbs

By Marcus Tanner

A **BRITISH** army major is under police investigation for allegedly spying for the Bosnian Serbs, amid claims his arrest was prompted by the CIA.

Martin Bell, the independent MP for Tatton, yesterday said Pentagon pressure lay behind the arrest by Ministry of Defence police of Milos Stankovic, 35, a member of the Parachute Regiment. Mr Stankovic allegedly passed top-secret Nato plans to Ratko Mladic, the brutal Serb army chief who masterminded the massacre of the Muslims of Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia 1995 and indicted for genocide by the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague.

The investigation threatens to reopen many old wounds about the record in the 1992-95 Bosnian conflict of the British army, which both Bosnia's Muslim-led government as well as the Americans thought bent over backwards to curry favour with the Serbs.

Mr Bell said Mr Stankovic, who was arrested in October last year during a course at the army college in Bracknell, Berkshire, was the victim of an injustice that bore comparison to France's infamous Dreyfus case a century ago.

The MP said the Army had buckled under pressure from Washington to get rid of anyone serving in Bosnia who had family ties in Serbia. This, in spite of the fact that it was these connections that the Army had found useful in the first case. "Everything he was valued for, he was arrested for," he said.

"The original complaint comes from the CIA. The Americans weren't happy with anyone with a

family background in Serbia, even though his value to Unprofor [the UN peacekeeping force in Bosnia] was that he could get close to the Serb people.

"If he did any spying, it was for the British. In Pale [the Bosnian Serb capital] the Serbs said that he was a nice enough chap, but always remember, his loyalty is to his Crown and his regiment".

Of Serbian descent, Mr Stankovic was the Army's chief liaison officer in 1995 when UN peacekeepers and aid workers were taken hostage by the Serbs in 1995. The British UN commander General Rupert Smith removed him from his post in April 1995, apparently following complaints about his alleged outspoken support for the Bosnian Serb cause. He was, however, promoted from captain to major on his return to the UK and was also decorated for his Bosnian service.

Mr Bell said his arrest was a poor reward for someone who had played a part in getting the Bosnian Serbs to unblock food convoys to besieged towns. "He helped to fix up the ceasefire in Bosnia in 1994," he said. The MP said the Americans had been "angry" that the then British commander of UN forces in Bosnia, General Sir Michael Rose, had someone of Serb descent at his right hand. The MP added: "In four months they have failed to find anything. His career has already been ruined by the mere fact of the arrest".

Mr Stankovic—his army career in tatters—is now living with his mother in Cornwall. Dana Stankovic told reporters her son would like to discuss the case but was prohibited from doing so.

M15 embarrassed, page 9



Rallying call: Countryside supporters walking up Piccadilly to Hyde Park yesterday when almost 300,000 protesters arrived in London in more than 2,000 coaches and 29 special trains; it took five hours for all the marchers to leave the Embankment after the official start just before 10.30am. Photograph: Peter Macdarmid

White House purses lips over Clinton 'kiss'

By Mary Dejevsky
in Washington

AMERICA's television networks yesterday quoted "well-placed sources" as saying that the White House was ready to admit that President Clinton had had a physical relationship with Monica Lewinsky.

The reports, which insist the relationship went "no further than kissing" fuelled suggestions that the White House is preparing to revise its account of the Clinton-Lewinsky relationship. Mr Clinton was described in the reports as being distressed about the allegations, blaming himself and worrying about the effect on his family.

The first report embarrassed official Washington and revived the original question: did President Clinton have an affair with the White House trainee and

tell her to lie about it?

Although both Mr Clinton and Ms Lewinsky have insisted under oath that there was no affair, Ms Lewinsky has been taped saying she and Mr Clinton had a sexual relationship.

The new White House version, according to CBS, is that Ms Lewinsky's claims are no more than girlish-exaggeration among friends.

With the Washington machine decamped to Utah where the Clintons were celebrating Chelsea Clinton's 18th birthday, it was a full 24 hours before the official rebuttal came, and it was less than comprehensive. "The White House has no new strategy that we are about to unveil," the deputy spokesman, Joe Lockhart, finally told the cable channel, CNN. He called the CBS report as "inaccurate".

Leading article, page 18

Good women make men behave badly — Straw

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

BOYS and men across the social spectrum are acting like the hapless characters in the television comedy *Men Behaving Badly* because they cannot cope with the greater success of girls and women, Jack Straw, the Home Secretary said yesterday.

"Some men find it really very difficult to cope with the fact that women are now increasingly on an equal footing," Mr Straw told Alastair Stewart on GMTV's Sunday programme. "And they cope, as it were, cope badly, but try to cope with that by acting the goat, by

being the fool, and you see this in schools and in families as well, where some boys almost give up on trying to keep up with the girls.

"I think that's a really serious social problem; and it's one, by the way, which is classless."

Mr Straw said: "It's worth remembering that the main characters in *Men Behaving Badly* are, as it were, middle-class lads who are dumbing themselves down."

His own view was that the programme, which he found entertaining, mirrored what was happening in society. "There's certainly something quite wor-

rying about what is happening to a generation of men."

For those out of work, the Government was delivering its welfare-to-work programme and adult literacy schemes, and Chris Woodhead, Chief Inspector of Schools, told the same programme that it was possible to remedy some of the problems with improved education for boys learning slowly.

"If a lad leaves primary school unable to read," he said, "it seems to me inevitable that his self-esteem is going to be low. He won't be able to cope with the demands of secondary school curriculum and as a result, he will seek refuge in de-

viant behaviour...

"Why do girls do better? I think that they are more willing to accept the authority of teachers in schooling; they're more eager to please their teachers; and there are people, I'm not sure about this, who see reading as something that appeals more to girls and women than to boys and men."

Mr Woodhead also accepted that there was a greater degree of coarseness within society at large, citing the example of the *Damn of Dock Green* presentation of an idealised view of the police in the Fifties, when he was growing up, compared with *The Bill* today.

"It's very much gritty, documentary, lowest common denominator realism," Mr Woodhead said. He felt that such things were influential. However, he added: "On the other hand, I do think we have to keep things in perspective; this laddish culture thing."

The shepherd in Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale* said: "I wish there were no age between 10 and 23, because young men get wench with child, upset the ancients, stealing and fighting." Mr Woodhead added: "Four hundred years ago; the same problem. So I think we've got to keep these things in perspective."

Today's news

Kohl's challenger
Germany's popular politician, Gerhard Schröder, won the Social Democrats nomination as their candidate to fight Helmut Kohl. Page 11

Threat to Winnie
Nelson Mandela is fighting to evict his ex-wife Winnie from their former home which she has turned into a lucrative museum. Page 12



5 facts about Louise Woodward

- 1 this girl was only 19 when she was charged with the murder of a baby.
- 2 on the day of the trial, she was only 20 years old.
- 3 if a jury finds her guilty, she could face a life sentence.
- 4 if Louise loses the appeal, she will face a minimum jail sentence of 10 years.
- 5 there are 10,000 British girls like Louise working as au pairs in the United States.

tonight at 7pm on 5

PEOPLE LIFE NEWS

Bodyguard who must dive for cover from the media

WHEN Trevor Rees-Jones made his first, faltering steps into the full glare of the media spotlight as he left the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris last October, it seemed somehow appropriate that he was wearing sunglasses.

The former member of the 1st Battalion the Parachute Regiment with a degree in sport and biological science had been a member of the so-called Fayed protection team since 1994 and so a studied anonymity had been part of his stock in trade. Publicity was something he had learnt to avoid, but now everyone knew his name, and more particularly everyone wanted to know how much he remembered of that fateful summer night in Paris that killed the Princess of Wales, her boyfriend Dodi Fayed and their driver.

Five months on from his release from hospital, Mr Rees-Jones still bears the scars of his horrific injuries, most strikingly a five-inch welt which meanders from his left nostril across his cheek, but his health has improved remarkably. He has returned to light duties four days a week at Harrods and friends in his home town of Oswestry say that he is hoping to begin playing for the local rugby team again in September.

The real fight that Mr Rees-Jones now faces is in fending off the media and attempting to return to his former anonymity. It could be a long fight, for as *Mirror* editor Piers Morgan put it on Saturday, "This is no ordinary Trevor. This is the most famous Trevor in the world."

To be honest, one struggles to think of any competition in terms of world-famous Trevors, but you catch Mr Morgan's drift. His purple prose was all part of talking up the "exclusive" interview with Mr Rees-Jones which begins today in his newspaper. In three interviews with Herve Stephan, Mr Rees-Jones had told the judge investigating the accident that he was unable to recall anything about the actual crash on 31 August last year. However, at a meeting with his psychiatrist last Wednesday, Mr Rees-Jones remembered "a little more" (his own words). Later the same day, he was interviewed by Piers Morgan at Harrods.

Mr Rees-Jones was in hiding yesterday after making a statement via his

IN THE NEWS

TREVOR REES-JONES

solicitors stressing that he had not received "one penny piece" from the *Mirror* newspaper for the interview nor had he granted them any form of exclusivity. He also expressed his concern about previous articles in the press which had criticised his professional conduct on the night of the crash and had suggested that he was not properly trained for his role. "These allegations are wholly spurious and I will, as and when I think it appropriate to do so, make public comment," his statement said.

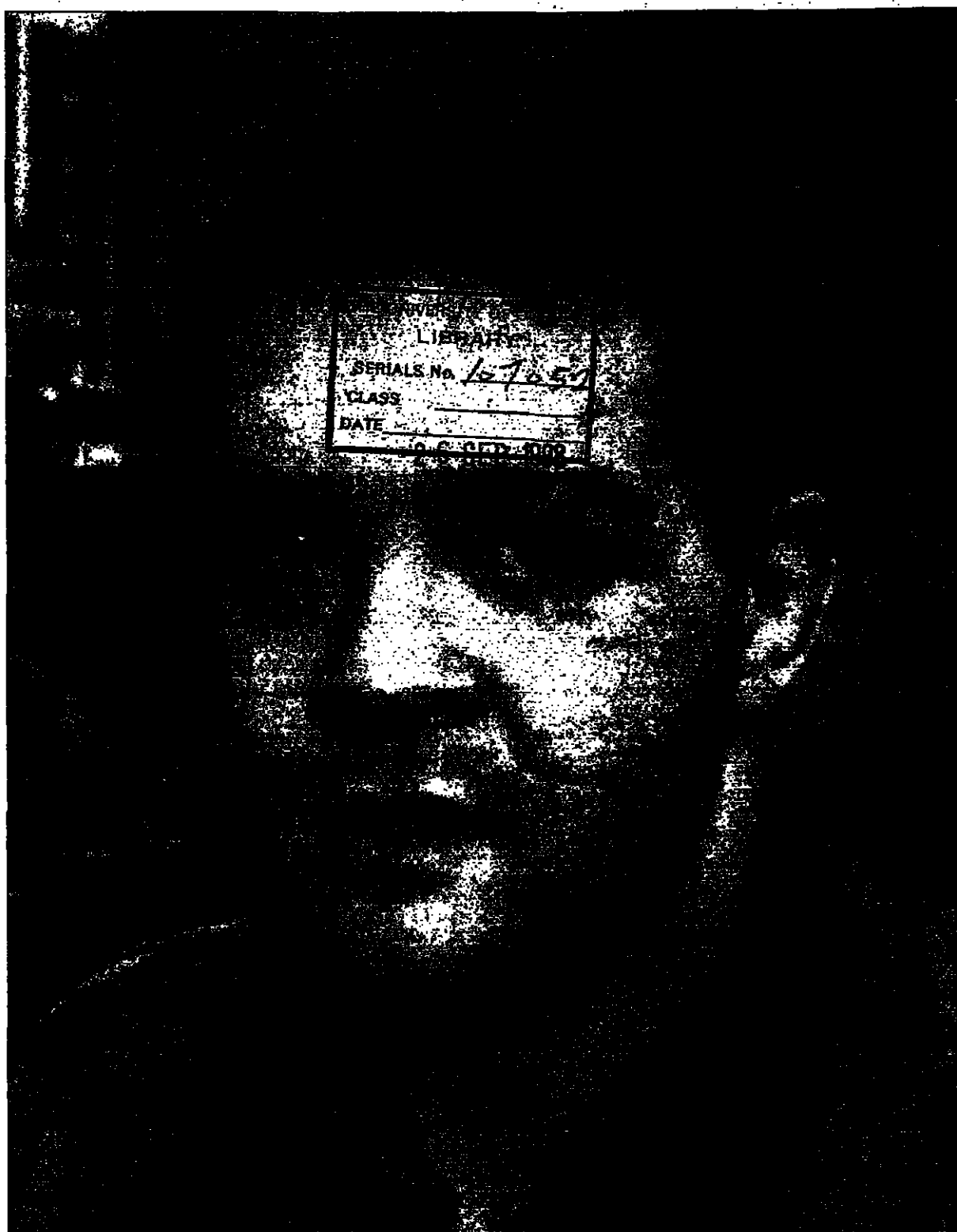
According to Mr Rees-Jones, the *Mirror*'s claims about exclusivity have caused him and his family "great personal difficulty". One wonders, therefore, why he spoke to them at all. Which is where Mohamed al-Fayed comes in.

Recently, Mr Fayed gave his own interview to Mr Morgan in which he presented his somewhat eccentric version of events surrounding the accident. This included his claim that a nurse at Pitié-Salpêtrière had passed on to him the Princess of Wales's final words and his belief that the Mercedes was deliberately forced off the road.

Mr Fayed's involvement in this latest turn of events has been described as "massive" and it has even been alleged that he was present during the interview. Since Mr Fayed is not only Mr Rees-Jones's employer but also paid his medical and psychiatric bills, some have suggested that, for the second time in six months, the latter has found himself stitched up, this time metaphorically.

For the moment, the man they called "Dodi's shadow" is keeping a low profile. However, he says he will be leaving his secret hiding place in the near future in order to have a further meeting with Judge Stephan and inform him of his latest recollections. One hopes he takes his sunglasses with him. He is going to need them.

Tim Hulse



Scarred but healing: Five months after being released from hospital Trevor Rees-Jones is back at work

TREVOR'S TONGUE

It was widely reported in the days immediately following the accident that Rees-Jones had lost his tongue in the crash (or "his tongue was ripped out in the horror", as the *Sun* put it). This of course was not the case, but he did undergo a ten-hour operation to rebuild his jaw and for a time it was feared that he would not make a full recovery from the serious facial, head and chest injuries he had suffered. The fact that he did has much to do with his extremely high level of fitness. As one former army friend puts it, "Trevor is as strong as an ox". According to his father-in-law, he is "a very fit lad".

TREVOR'S DOUBLE LIFE

The extent of Rees-Jones's former anonymity is illustrated by the fact that only his closest relatives knew what his job was. Team-mates at his local rugby club in Oswestry thought he worked for a London security firm and had no idea that he jetted around the world as Dodi Fayed's minder. "God knows how he could have worked with Princess Di then not let on," one of them commented. Rees-Jones was considered to be the life and soul of the party at Oswestry Rugby Club, but he never talked about his job. "Trevor is a very confidential guy," says one of his friends.

HE AND MRS REES-JONES

Rees-Jones was simply Trevor Rees until 1995 when he married his wife, Sue, and added her surname to his. The pair had met during their time at Fitzalan School in Oswestry. Mrs Rees-Jones was once a buyer for Harrods and now runs a kitchen and gift shop in the town. By last June the marriage had hit a rocky patch. Rees-Jones's wife had asked him for a quickie divorce and he had moved out of their luxury home in Whittington, Shropshire. Nevertheless, his wife immediately flew out to be at his bedside after hearing news of the crash. She told reporters, "I'm very fond of Trevor and will give him my full emotional, moral and any other support I possibly can during his recovery from his awful injuries." Ironically, surgeons used photographs from Rees-Jones's wedding as a guide when they were rebuilding his face.

Gifts for godchildren in Princess's will

By Kate Watson-Smyth

THE PRINCESS of Wales's will - posthumously altered to ensure that her 17 godchildren and her former butler benefit - is expected to be published today.

The change to her will, made after she died in a car crash in Paris, will ensure that the butler, Paul Burrell, whom she described as her "rock", is among the beneficiaries of her £21m estate.

The posthumous amendment will also mean that her sons, Princes William and Harry, can inherit their share before they are 25.

The original will was made in June 1993 and was not changed when she and the Prince of Wales divorced three years later. She had left her estate to be divided between her sons equally, with no account taken of the fact that Prince William will inherit the throne.

Last December, however, solicitors acting for the executors and Princes William and Harry obtained a court order to vary the will, and a posthumous amendment was added to the

original document to reflect the Princess's love for her godchildren.

A spokeswoman for the Law Society said posthumous changes to a will were not uncommon. "It happens quite often and as long as all the beneficiaries agree with the changes then it can be done," she explained.

"It sometimes happens when, for example, the children of someone who has died want to give something to someone who was very close to the deceased but who was not mentioned in the will."

It is thought that three-quarters of the Princess's estate will go to her sons, Prince William, 15, and Prince Harry, 13, will also receive the stake in Spencer House in London, which their mother shared with her sisters Lady Sarah McCorquodale and Lady Jane Fellowes, her brother Earl Spencer, and a group of trustees.

The 18th century house, which overlooks Green Park, is now a museum and art gallery, and is also used as a banqueting suite.

Each one of her godchildren, aged between two and 16, will be able to choose a personal item which had belonged to the Princess.

Her godchildren come from a variety of backgrounds and include the children of friends such as Dominic Lawson and his wife Rosa Monckton and royalty such as Prince Philippos, the 11-year-old son of ex-King Constantine of Greece.

Mr Burrell is expected to receive £50,000 made at the bequest of the Spencer family.

The bulk of her estate comes from the Princess's divorce settlement, with the remainder from investments and her personal fortune.

The will will be available from the Principal Registry of the Family Division at Somerset House in London for 75p or for £2 by post - and demand is expected to be huge.

The Princess's most senior aide, Michael Gibbons, said yesterday that her sons would be "very distressed" by an attack on the Princess by the rock star Noel Gallagher.

In an interview with a local

paper in Australia, where Oasis are on tour, Gallagher said: "So she died in a car crash, big deal."

Using a flurry of obscenities when referring to the national outpouring of grief, the Oasis star is reported to have said: "Fat ****ing British housewives are a pathetic bunch of ****ers, do you know what I mean?"

"Half the people there probably wouldn't visit their grandmother's grave... then they go and throw flowers at some coffin of some bird they've never met because she'd done some work for charity."

"I wasn't interested in anything she'd done for charity - or her personal life. So she died in a car crash. Big ****ing deal. It didn't affect me. I really couldn't give a **** at the end of the day."

Mr Gibbons said: "This sort of statement can only be incredibly distressing to members of her family and particularly to the two boys."

"I expect to be approached by many devastated people over this. It's appalling."

By Alan Murdoch

Ireland mourns comic talent as 'Father Ted' actor dies, aged 45



Dermot Morgan: 'A prince'

THE Irish comedian and actor Dermot Morgan who died at the weekend was best-known in Britain for his portrayal of Father Ted in the eponymous, surreal Channel 4 comedy about three wayward priests banished to a bleak island.

Morgan, 45, collapsed at a dinner party at his London home on Saturday night. He died shortly afterwards from a suspected heart attack.

His earlier work in his own country arguably touched even greater heights, winning him mass public acclaim as Ireland's most subversive wit, but also eventual disapproval from faint-hearted media managers.

In Ireland many felt *Father Ted* sometimes reflected a sharper mirror-image of today's Catholic Church than the rosier *Ballykissangel*.

Ted Crilly was by turns devious, cunning and disingenuous. Echoing the sex and embezzlement scandal involving the Bishop of Galway Eamon Casey, he was once reminded by fellow Craggy Island exile Father Dougal that parish funds had been traced back to

his personal bank account.

Dougal: You took the money, Ted.

Ted: It wasn't like that.

Dougal: It was in your account.

Ted: It was only resting there.

But despite the success of the programme, Morgan had recently admitted that he was looking forward to taking off the dog collar and possibly returning to the comedy circuit.

"I wanted to get out of the dog collar because I've been doing priests for some time now. And I didn't want to be a Clive Dunn and do Grandad for the

rest of my life," he said in an interview days before he died.

"Ted's been a great door opener for me and I'll miss him and certainly working with such a great cast, but I have to branch out."

He spoke vaguely about about having projects in the pipeline and a possible return to the comedy circuit.

"There's a great buzz about stand-up, I've always loved it and that's hard to turn your back on. But if a straight role came along I'd never say never."

The sitcom, which has turned the unpriestly curse of "fack" into a common catchphrase, is shown and loved in 10 countries and numbers Steven Spielberg and Madonna among its fans. U2's Bono requested a part in the series.

Father Ted's success was some consolation for the silencing of *Scrap Saturday*, Morgan's hugely successful Irish radio satirical show, scripted jointly with his equally politicised collaborator Gerry Stembridge.

Its finest moments came in the public pretensions of Charles J Haughey to international statesmanship, while hinting dangerously at seamy

business links and the then-premier's abundant sexual appetites.

Morgan had a uncanny ability to get inside Haughey's head. The character's private utterances to his trusty lackey, press secretary PJ Mara, enabled Morgan to glory in Haughey's every intonation and bilious prejudice. The character became part-Napoleon, part-Godfather, and imperious symbol of the nation.


Morgan/Haughey would thus describe his nearest neighbours to as "a nation of nobodies driving around the English Midlands on Sunday afternoons in their Austin Allegros".

And venturing into distant Sligo grubbing for votes, Morgan/Haughey asked: "How come all my people look retarded, Mara?"

The current Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern (himself satirised mercilessly by Morgan), said yesterday that he was deeply shocked by the performer's death and called him a "Prince" among modern Irish comedians.

He said: "Dermot was one of the greatest entertainers ever produced by this country."

Obituary, page 18



The Aroma of fresh coffee without the exploitation

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By Steve Goodwin

For Neil Perkins, 26, a mechanic travelling with his wife,

Goodness knows when they got back to the coach and those bottles of scotch that one hard-dressed hill farmer had stashed on the luggage rack.

Fur point: A countryside supporter sporting a dead wild cat from Scotland while marching to Hyde Park in London yesterday Photograph: Brian

Photograph: Brian Harris

Steve Boggan hears the marchers' point of view



Paddy Sweeney, 77, from North Yorkshire

"I am not afraid to speak up for hunting despite the fact that all my life my job [as a vet] has been to treat and cure animals. If hunting were banned, I believe foxes would be extinct within 100 years. At least the hunts have an interest in trying to preserve them and their environment."



**Maureen Burgess, of
Childrey, Oxfordshire**

"People don't think of the effects of a hunting ban. My daughter runs a small feed company of five people. If there is no more hunt, they would go out of business. Five more unemployed people in a small community can have a serious impact."



**Nigel Murch, 48, from
Ramsbury, Wiltshire**

"Surely this is all about personal liberty and freedom of choice. I do not hunt but I would defend the rights of people who do want to."

"I voted Labour at the election and now I'm beginning to wonder whether that was a mistake."



Lucy McMillan-Scott, 24,
from London

"I am not pro-hunting but I believe in people's freedom to choose what they do.
"It seems to me that this is about a bunch of city people telling country people what they should and should not do. That doesn't seem fair to me."



**John Biron, 40, farmer
from East Sussex**

"I used to be a beef farmer but I had to switch to sheep because of the BSE fiasco. Now I'm even worried about that. I hunt and feel that Michael Foster's Bill would be disastrous for the countryside. Fox-hunting is the most sustainable way of limiting their numbers."



















**Margaret Tabor, 78,
farmer from Essex**

"Our farm has been in my late husband's family for over 400 years. During the whole time, there has been hunting as a way of life – and part of that is a way of conserving the countryside. I fear that if hunting goes, shooting will go next, and then the countryside will be without its sports."

... ..

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Woman not clone: Louise Hayman, The Independent's in-house lawyer, dressing to please herself

Photograph: Brian Harris

Female lawyers told dress holds you back

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

FOR ANY women wondering why they have not got to the top of the legal professions, at least there may be an answer: it could have been that cardigan you once wore.

Despite the fact that in the last few weeks both the Lord Chancellor and the Attorney-General have faced accusations of operating "old boy networks", the Solicitors' Exhibition sponsored by the Law Society Gazette has come to the conclusion that the real problem that holds women back in the law is the way they dress. This comes just days after a landmark case in which a judge was found guilty of sexually harassing his pupil.

While women make up more than half of all admissions into the legal profession, they

are 30 per cent less likely to get to the top, according to a recent survey. The Law Society's Research and Policy Planning Unit reports that since 1987 the number of female admissions has risen by 100 per cent compared with only 59 per cent amongst men. Yet of solicitors who have been in practice for between 10 and 19 years and are

now partners, 87 per cent are men and 63 per cent women. "We believe that visual imagery has a major influence on professional acceptance," said Nigel Stevens of Nationwide Exhibitions. "Producing a credible imagery from the female wardrobe is an important issue."

To help with that "credible imagery", Mr Stevens has

produced a list courtesy of image consultants The House of Colour. Women should avoid open necks, perfume, dangly jewellery, cardigans, double pierced ears and bare legs. They should always wear make up and never let undied hair roots show.

However, according to Mary-Ann Stephenson of the

Fawcett Society, "It's distracting attention from what's really holding women back. The problems women solicitors have are because of discriminatory attitudes... Women should not have to feel they are to blame."

Last week a judge was found guilty of sexually harassing a woman trainee barrister in a landmark ruling. It is the first

time a female pupil has brought such a charge. Senior barrister and part-time recorder Christopher Sutton-Mattocks, 46, was brought before the Bar's disciplinary tribunal and fined £500 for persistently harassing Claire Kavanaugh, 25, at his London chambers.

The week before Josephine Hayes announced she was suing the Attorney-General John Morris over claims of sex discrimination. And two weeks earlier the Lord Chancellor was accused of operating an illegal old boys' network by solicitor Jane Coker.

"Yes, we agree men should be changing their attitudes," said Christine Windsor of the House of Colour. "But... women can control how they present themselves and everyone makes judgements on the person. That's just the way it happens."

'What is so evil about a shortish skirt?'

NOW AT last I have been told where I have been going wrong all these years: why criminals have turned up their noses at my legal services and business clients have spurned me for the more familiar arms of crumpled-suited chaps. It is the way I dress.

Organisers of the "Solicitors' exhibition opening tomorrow at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham have come up a truly depressing photograph of the ideal for us to work towards. What is

so evil about shortish skirts or cardigans?

Most top-class women solicitors I have come across have succeeded without any consideration for dress conventions. A brilliant, trailblazing partner at a top City firm was the unidentified subject of a management memo one summer. It denounced a woman who had been sighted in the corridors "half dressed". Eager searchers eventually detempered with the discovery of the corporate lawyer, bare-legged.

Some people - men - will always find threatening any woman who dresses in her own style and speaks her own mind. If what they want is Dolly the Clone, sitting in a formula suit, then they will get bovine passivity and sheepish advice.

I strive for Funky but Neat. I can do this as I work in the woman- and individualist-friendly media industries. Out there they still burn tightless women at the stake.

— Louise Hayman, *Independent* lawyer

Saudi king intervenes for jailed nurses

By Steve Boggan

THE Saudi Arabian royal family has taken personal control over the fates of two British nurses facing murder charges so it can avoid losing face while allowing them to return home.

Lawyers for Lucille McLauchlan and Deborah Parry expect the women to be freed "very soon" as a result of moves that will allow a humanitarian intervention by King Fahd.

The *Independent* has learned that responsibility for the case against the women was taken away from the court of cassation, three weeks ago and handed over to the ministry of the interior, headed by the king's brother, Prince Naif bin Abdul-Aziz.

He will make a recommendation to King Fahd which is expected to be favourable. Because the prisoners are women, because no other Saudis were involved in the case and because the matter is diplomatically sensitive, it is understood that the prince's recommendation will be for the women's sentences to be fixed at about the amount of time they have already served.

They are accused of murdering Yvonne Gilford, 55, an Australian colleague, at the King Fahd Military Medical Centre in Dammam in December 1996. They have always protested their innocence. The court found Ms McLauchlan, 32, guilty and sentenced her to eight years in prison and 500 lashes but no verdict has yet been passed on Ms Parry, 40. Under Saudi law, they could have been beheaded.

Responsibility for the case passed to the ministry of the interior because Ms Gilford's brother, Frank Gilford, signed

a death penalty waiver on the promise of £730,000 in "blood money". That took the matter away from the private domain of the families involved and into the public domain of the Saudi administration.

"That meant the case was passed to the ministry and it is being considered before a recommendation will be made to the highest authorities," said Salah al-Hejailan, the nurses' lawyer in Saudi Arabia.

"The maximum penalty the ministry could recommend would be five years but in this case it will be much less. I understand that because of the unusual circumstances of the case, because they are women, because Miss Parry is unwell and because no Saudis were involved, the sentence on both will be around one year. They will be going home very soon."

On Saturday, Grant Ferrie, who married Ms McLauchlan in prison last year, and Jonathan Ashbee, brother-in-law of Miss Parry, flew to Saudi. Last night, the women's families and British lawyers said they had heard nothing about them being sent home.

As reported in the *Independent* on Sunday, the expected conclusion of the affair has been achieved without paying the blood money to Mr Gilford. Mr Hejailan has refused to authorise its release, arguing that the amount is too high. Mr Gilford has offered to donate much of it to the building of a hospital department in his sister's name and expects to keep only £50,000 for himself.

However, Mr Hejailan said he had told Mr Gilford he deserved only half of it. "I believe the other half should go to the welfare of the girls," he said.

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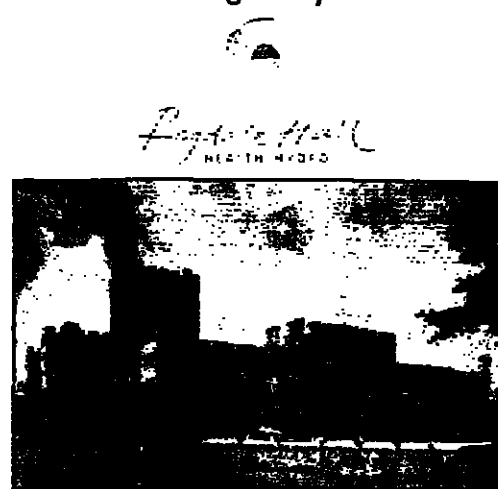
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Mowlam stresses urgency of Ulster referendum

Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, yesterday stressed the urgent need to put a settlement to the people of Northern Ireland before the province's volatile marching season gets under way.

She insisted the peace talks were on track for a 7 May referendum, although she conceded "a slight delay" was possible. "But further down the road we have the parades and I don't think anybody would want to hold a referendum during the marching season," she told the BBC's *On the Record* programme. "It is a tight timetable. But we are working very hard to get the legislation together and the electoral machinery up and running." Ms Mowlam added that she believed "real progress" had been made in the talks over the past week.

Super-teachers for schools

The Government yesterday unveiled details of its proposals for a new grade of "super-teacher", which could attract salaries up to £40,000.

Advanced Skills Teachers would be the best in their profession, and the new grade would allow them to remain in the classroom, rather than switch to management in search of higher pay. David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, also intends AST teachers to spend at least a day a week in other schools, helping to spread their expertise. But the plan sparked a row with the teaching unions, who said it cut across salary differentials, and would create "divisions" in schools.

Hillsborough families' war

Families of the Hillsborough Stadium disaster victims last night declared political war on the Government.

Members of the family support group, set up in the wake of the 1989 tragedy in which 96 Liverpool fans died, met at the club's Anfield ground for the first time since the Home Secretary Jack Straw ruled out a fresh inquiry.

Merseyside MPs will be the first to be targeted, with each being asked to sign a pledge of support and if necessary resign the Labour whip.

Schoolgirls in boxing ring

A controversial boxing match between two schoolgirls, postponed from last year because of adverse publicity, is set to go ahead this week under a veil of secrecy.

The Amateur Boxing Association is believed to have imposed a press blackout before the contest between 13-year-olds Andrea Prime, from Leicester and Emma Brammer in Stoke-on-Trent on Tuesday.

Sacked major to appeal

A top soldier who accused the Army of being sexist, racist and snobbish said yesterday that he will "almost certainly" appeal against his discharge. Major Eric Joyce, 36, attacked his sacking as the most "spectacularly constructive dismissal" this century. But recent developments he said were only "a temporary set back" and could not stop progress within the Armed Forces.

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Hague hardens against the euro

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

WILLIAM HAGUE is edging towards outright opposition to the European single currency, arguing that it would be a step towards a European superstate.

The Conservative leader's current line is that the party will oppose the single currency at the next election - effectively ruling out membership for another nine years under the Tories.

The party has argued that the unknown economic consequences of membership need to be tested for some years before Britain joins up to the euro, while Labour is saying that it should be possible to form an economic judgement soon after the next election.

But the latest official Tory shift against the currency is being based on the argument that it would lead directly to a political superstate, with a massive loss of British political sovereignty - effectively putting a complete Tory block on membership.

In a speech on the constitution last week, Mr Hague said in a little-noticed passage that he would be making a further speech on the "far-reaching constitutional implications of

Britain's membership of the European Union" in May.

However, he also said: "We would well find ourselves some way down the road to a United States of Europe, with all that entails for national sovereignty and accountability."

That view has been strongly endorsed over recent weeks by some of Mr Hague's senior Shadow Cabinet colleagues.

Peter Lilley, the shadow Chancellor, said in an official Conservative Party press release last Friday that the Government "have signed up to EMU [economic and monetary union, the single currency] as a political project to transfer more control over our affairs to Europe."

Michael Howard, the Tory spokesman on foreign affairs, said in another party press release last Monday that "constitutional questions" about full political union were "at the heart of this decision. They cannot be ignored."

But the strongest line has been coming from John Redwood, the party's trade and industry spokesman, who recently had a press release repudiated by Mr Hague because it was offensive to the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl.

In another press release last Monday - again issued by Con-

servative Central Office, with leadership approval - Mr Redwood said that a single currency would be like taking out a joint bank account with the neighbours.

"A single budget leads to a single government," he said. "Once you have entered into your joint bank account with your neighbours, they control all of your finances, how much holiday time you can have, whether you can work overtime and how much you pay for food, goods and services. You have little control left over how you run your life."

In the end, Mr Redwood concluded, it would even become "pointless" to hold general elections. "No matter who you elected, they would still be only one voice among fifteen more in Brussels and your views would not matter very much."

"Your Members of Parliament would have no more power to influence your life than an opposition councillor on council with a built-in majority," he said.

The bank account image was pursued yesterday by Mr Lilley, who told Alastair Stewart on GMTV's *Sunday Programme*: "We don't want to merge our bank accounts with our partners."



Talking plans: Former prime minister John Major told Sir David Frost on television yesterday that he was ready 'to speak my mind' in the Commons

Major prefers bench in Commons to seat on the board

By Anthony Bevins

JOHN MAJOR has turned down more than a dozen offers of company directorships since he left No 10.

The former prime minister said on BBC1's *Frost on Sunday* interview that he was hoping to accept one or two offers

"because they are of great interest that will take a very small amount of my time". But he added that as MP for Huntingdon, "I intend to play a full part in the House of Commons ... I have turned down a number of - I think about 15 - non-executive directorships."

Mr Major said: "I thought

a period of silence after the election was both prudent and necessary, but I now propose to speak my mind whenever I feel the need to do so in the House of Commons."

He said he expected he would stand at the next election, but added: "I haven't definitely decided that I will do so." But

he ruled out any possibility of returning to office. "I don't think I'm going to get back into government again," he said.

Mr Major said Tony Blair had made fundamental errors on the economy. "What we have now seen is that because of those tax changes, because of the five interest rate rises we

have had, you now have an extraordinarily high rate of exchange for the pound sterling that is beginning to cause real pain for manufacturing industry," he said. His view was that Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was building up a war chest of cash for pre-election bribery of the voters.

Scottish parliament in search of a seat

By Kate Watson Smythe

SCOTLAND'S first parliament for nearly 300 years could spend the first two years of its life in Glasgow before moving to a permanent home in Edinburgh.

The new parliament comes into being in 2000 after elections next year, but its site at Holyrood in Edinburgh will not be ready until late in 2001.

The three buildings now under consideration are Strathclyde House, former home of the regional council in central Glasgow, and two other sites in Edinburgh: the Church of Scotland general assembly hall and the old Royal High School at Calton Hill.

Lord Steel, the former Liberal Party leader, said the proposed buildings were unbecoming to the dignity of

the new parliament. "To use an ex-council chamber outside the capital and borrow premises from the church cannot be the right start and I would say that MPs know the limitations of the Calton Hill," he said.

George Reid, the SNP spokesman on constitutional affairs, said he believed Calton Hill should be the temporary home. The church building was "impossible" in terms of office space and parking, and the Glasgow site was no more than a "sudden notion" by Donald Dewar, Secretary of State for Scotland. And he said the proposal to use the old council building "downgrades our national legislature by linking it to a defunct local authority."

A Scottish Office spokesman said the three temporary sites would all need some adaptation as none had enough office ac-

commodation. The cost of the Strathclyde building would be £3m, £4m for the General Assembly Hall and £5m for the old Royal School, most of which would be rental charges. Mr Dewar is expected to announce his decision by Easter.

The situation in Wales is similarly uncertain.

With little more than a year to go before the first meeting of the Welsh Assembly, the Welsh Office has yet to make up its mind where the assembly should be sited.

A spokesman for the Welsh Office said yesterday that Ron Davies, the Secretary of State for Wales, was expected to make his decision in the next couple of weeks.

"The choice is now between three or four sites in Cardiff and the Guild Hall in Swansea," the spokesman added.



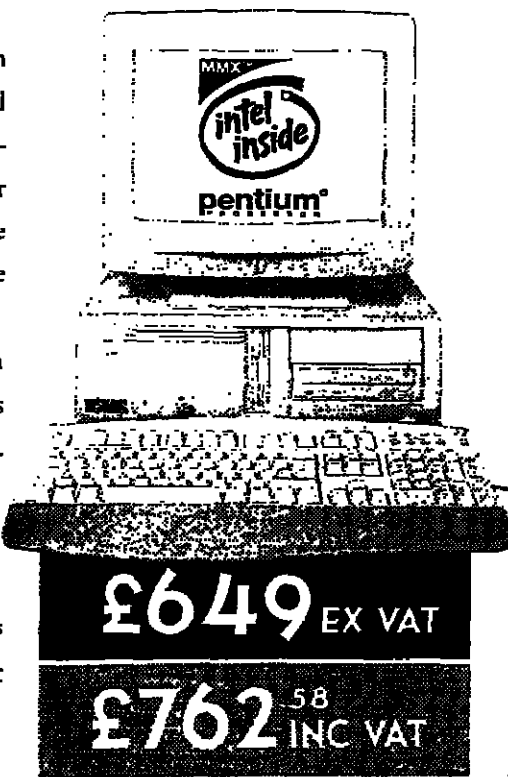
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Spy's book tells MI5's embarrassing secrets

By Andrew Roethorne
and Steve Boggan

MI5 BUGGED and tailed a Conservative MP who later became a cabinet minister, according to a potentially explosive book by a former agent now living in Australia.

Anthony Holland, who describes his work as an MI5 and MI6 "asset", claims that the MP was targeted because he was thought to be having a gay affair with the Tory peer Lord Robin Maugham, nephew of the author Somerset Maugham.

If true, his revelations will further embarrass the security services and result in calls for tighter controls on their activities. Last year, the new Labour government was rocked to its core by the revelations of former MI5 officer David Shayler, who described surveillance operations on potential "enemies

one meeting he had with General Moshe Dayan, the Israeli defence minister.

"At that time, we were well aware what they were up to," Mr. Holland claimed from his Melbourne home. "They weren't supposed to be developing their own bomb, but we helped them by turning a blind eye."

In Britain, his most audacious operation involved gathering evidence of the MP's alleged affair with Lord Maugham. He says the MP was regarded as a future minister and a potential security risk, although Mr Holland suspects the evidence was gathered to be used as leverage at a later date. Lord Maugham, who was openly homosexual, died in 1981.

The book, which is known only as "Project 21" at Geoff Coxon Publishing in Melbourne, describes how two addresses in London and Brighton, East Sussex, were put under round-the-clock surveillance. "By the time I joined the operation, most of the groundwork was done," Mr Holland says in the book.

"They [MI5] had Maugham's flat bugged throughout and the telephone tapped, and they had two miniature television cameras wired into the ceiling lights in the main bedroom and the lounge, so we could watch the show in comfort."

The former minister denied the affair when approached by The Independent this week. He said he had no knowledge of ever having been put under surveillance.

Other chapters include details of a spying operation that Mr Holland says he conducted on a German project to help Iran develop a nuclear weapon.

Mr Holland wrote the book as the latest stage in a campaign to clear his name of a crime he says he did not commit. He was jailed in 1981 at Bradford Crown Court for allegedly receiving stolen goods amounting to £250. He claims that he was framed by the security services.

Although it was his first offence, he was jailed for 12 months. Before his term was over, however, he was freed and sent to a new life in Australia, allegedly with the complicity of MI6. Melvyn Hodgson, the man he allegedly persuaded to steal for him, was found hanging in a prison cell in 1992.

His case has been taken up by Australian politicians and is being examined by the Criminal

Final Cases Review Commission.

Dr John Illingworth, a Leeds city councillor, has examined the evidence against Mr Holland and described it this week as "preposterous". He added: "I don't believe he would be convicted today. It is difficult to check the rest of the claims in the book, but those that can be checked are accurate."

Mr Holland said: "The only man who could clear me was Melvyn Hodgson because I believe he made a false confession. Once I heard he had been found hanging, I decided to blow the lid off these guys."

"I still don't know why they framed me, but I had been associating with a suspected IRA commander and perhaps they thought I was going over."

Once the book is published, I know I'll never be able to re-

turn to England. I just want to clear my name. I simply can't let them win."

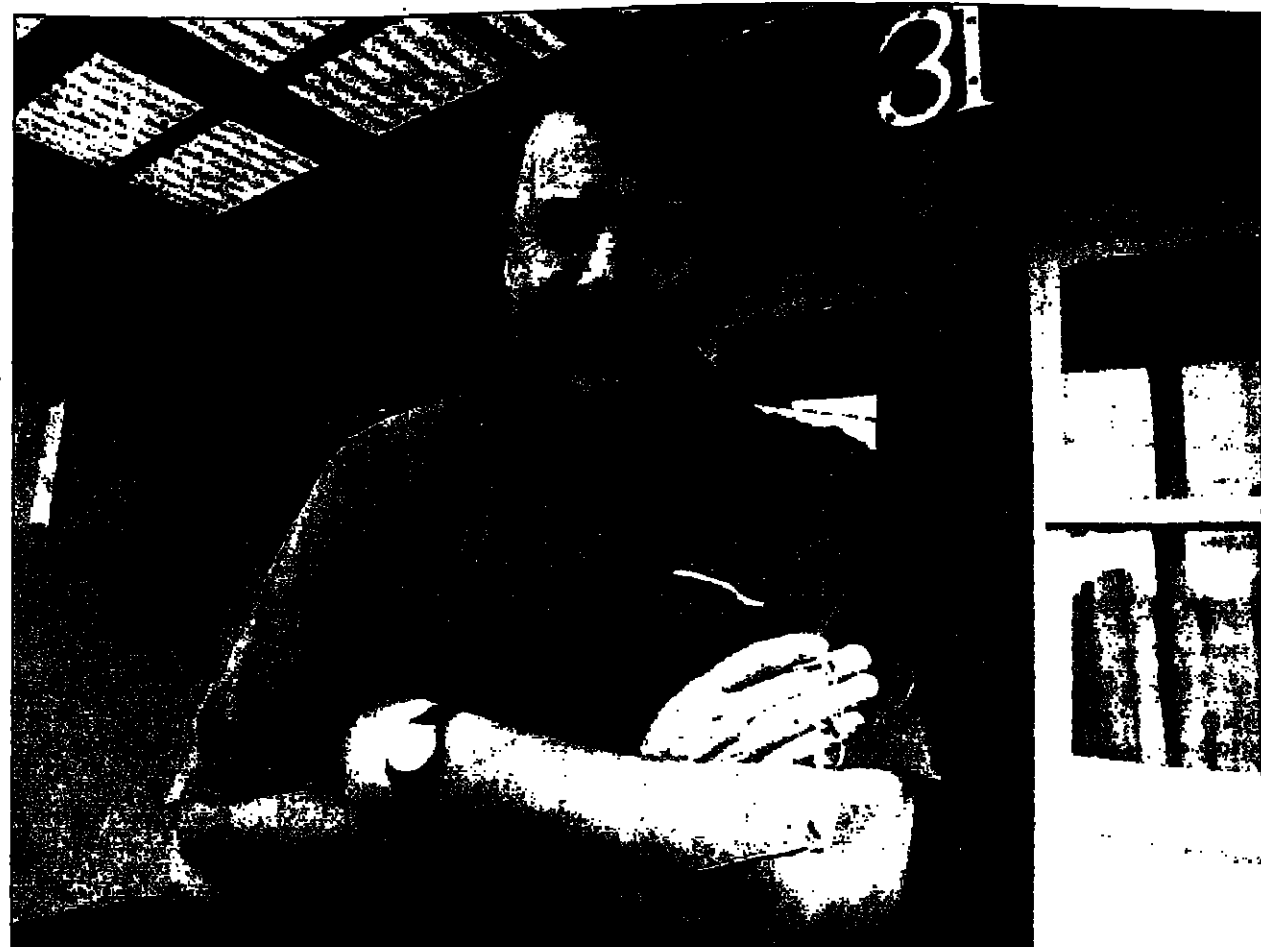
Geoff Coxon, Mr Holland's publisher, is hoping to avoid the kind of legal fight that resulted in Peter Wright's book *Spycatcher* being dragged through the courts.

"If it is published in Australia, your Official Secrets Act does not apply," he said.

"We are publishing in Victoria because in New South Wales truth is a defence, and we have gone to great lengths to prove the veracity of Anthony's claims."

"You might have a bit of difficulty getting it over there, but if it goes well, we hope to launch it on the American market next year."

The Home Office said it would not comment until it had seen the material. It never discusses operational matters.



Anthony Holland at home in Melbourne: "I just want to clear my name. I can't let them win"

Photograph: Joe Mann



Peter Wright: Author of controversial *Spycatcher*

of the state" - who included John Lennon, several Labour MPs and a young Jack Straw, now the Home Secretary.

In Mr Holland's book, which is due to be published in the summer by a small Melbourne-based publisher, he describes operations in the United Kingdom, South Africa, Iran, Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. Working as a freelance agent for MI5 and MI6, Mr Holland, 54, claims his real skills as an engineer allowed him to be placed in sensitive areas by the security services.

During one period in 1969, he was found a job at the Rössing uranium mine in South West Africa in order to find out whom it was supplying. He says he reported that it was feeding the Israeli nuclear programme, and even describes

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DAILY POEM

Those old songs ...

By Edwin Brock

grow in the mind,
their rhythms chiming endlessly
with the sound of feet walking
or rain falling or being taken up
by garden birds, one line at a time.

Landmarks, favourite stones,
reminders of moments
that only history makes important,
we hum them down to immortality

so that now they fence us in
with the faces of the lost opportunities,
and all the moons and Junes that ever were
are meadow-lurking above England.

This poem comes from Ambit magazine's tribute to Edwin Brock, who died last year. Ambit 151 also contains new poetry and prose from (among others) Alan Brownjohn, Ken Smith and George Searles. Published quarterly, Ambit costs £6 for one issue or £22 for a year's subscription, from 17 Priory Gardens, London N6 5QY.

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New tax credit could fail poorer families

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

POOR FAMILIES will not be helped automatically by replacing in-work benefits with a new system of tax credits. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation warns today.

At the moment, poorly-paid workers with children can claim family credit from the Benefits Agency. The working families tax credit is set to replace this with a tax rebate or reduction in tax liability

administered by the Inland Revenue. But the biggest potential advantages will come only if the Government commits extra resources to raise the minimum income of parents who work and reduce the rate at which benefits are withdrawn (known as the benefit tapers), the foundation says.

The JRF commissioned research from Australia, Canada and the United States which shows that tax credits can bring disadvantages as well as benefits to families, de-

pending on the detail of their design and how much money is spent on them. At present, the combined effects of income tax, national insurance and the benefit tapers can be to leave low-paid workers only 3p better off from every £1 of increased pay. The JRF calculates that on its own the 10p starting rate for income tax would do little to change this, with some low-paid workers still retaining less than 4p of every extra £1 earned.

In the US, Australia and Canada, maximum benefits are paid at a flat rate for

lower-earners and withdrawn relatively gradually. However, there is evidence in the US that the system creates severe disincentives to work as credit is withdrawn, and Canada has abolished its working income supplement scheme after finding that it reduced incentives to work in twice as many cases as it improved them.

Fraud is also a serious problem in the US, with a high proportion of claims relating for children who do not exist or are being claimed for more than once. The re-

view warns that a tax credit in the United Kingdom might lead to collusion between employers and staff to reduce the level of declared income or companies might be tempted to reduce wages, because lost pay would be made good by the tax credit.

"A tax credit is potentially an attractive way of helping needy working families because it allows them to depend less on transfers from the state and more on their own retained earnings and makes it easier for them to escape poverty," said Donald

Hirsch, advisor to the JRF. "Even so, the unforeseen problems with tax credits in other countries including work disincentives and widespread fraud make it vital the proposed British system is carefully designed and that its operation is closely monitored."

He added: "Evaluation should not only look at the specific impact of the working families tax credit, but also how it interacts with other welfare-to-work policies for people on low incomes, including the proposed national minimum wage."

Rantzen defends story on disabled patient

By Andrew Buncombe

Esther Rantzen, the television presenter and consumer rights campaigner, last night defended a controversial programme after it was criticised by watchdogs for being inaccurate.

The programme, part of the series *The Rantzen Report*, was broadcast in 1996 and claimed that the British Home and Hospital for Incurables (BHHI), in south London was neglecting one of its most severely handicapped patients.

Ms Rantzen said the programme, which examined the plight of Ian Parker, the disabled patient, had resulted in his being moved to another establishment. Her comments came after it was reported that the Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) had said the programme was "inaccurate, misleading and unfair".

Concern about the programme was first raised by John Ware, a reporter for the BBC's *Panorama* programme, who wrote that the programme had twisted the facts.

Ms Rantzen, who was cleared following an internal BBC inquiry into the pro-



Esther Rantzen, whose programme about the British Home and Hospital for Incurables in London sparked controversy Photograph: Hugh Dixon

gramme, last night insisted that her investigation into the hospital was justified.

"As far as I am concerned, I am extremely happy with the programme. The young man who was featured in it, Ian Parker, has now been transferred to a different hospital and his health has enormously

improved," she said. "That was the object his mother was intending and achieved by being interviewed for the programme."

"I was astonished by a report today that the BSC had reached these findings because as far as I am aware they have not yet been published."

A report in Sunday newspaper yesterday said the BSC had ruled that Ms Rantzen and her team were rather less than meticulous. It said the programme had wrongly claimed that Mr Parker had not been taken to a fête and said more investigation of the facts would have avoided the possibility of

a misleading picture of events. The report also stated that the commission attacked the use of a secret camera inside the hospital saying it was not justified and the programme should have "researched the story more thoroughly". A spokesman for the BBC said that the programme had

contained some minor errors which had involved a degree of unfairness, but that the programme makers had drawn reasonable conclusions from the evidence and that their journalistic integrity was not in doubt: "... the fundamental truth of the programme was not challenged," he said.

The report also stated that the commission attacked the use of a secret camera inside the hospital saying it was not justified and the programme should have "researched the story more thoroughly". A spokesman for the BBC said that the programme had

Childminders seek status

By Glenda Cooper

CHILDMINDERS are calling on the Government to introduce national training and qualifications as part of the "national childcare strategy".

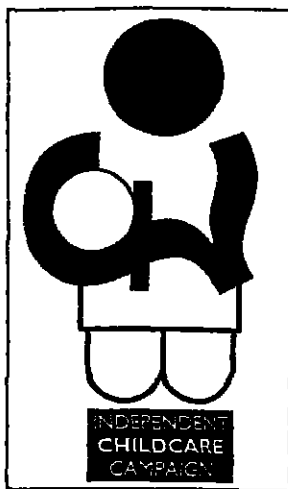
The National Childminders Association (NCA) will lobby the Government to bring in formal training which it says will raise the status of childminders who are frequently undervalued in their work.

"Far too often this is the sort of job people think they can do in between the housework," says Gill Haynes, chief executive of the NCA which has 50,000 members. "It is not. Looking after children is a demanding and skilled job. There is the underlying assumption that anyone who provides childcare is not doing a formal job and so doesn't need training."

At present, childminders are some of the worst-paid workers in Britain, with an average wage of £2 an hour.

"We want to give business support to what is a self-employed person running a small business from their home," said Ms Haynes. "Childminders are among the worst-paid workers in the world. Yet childminders offer care that is individual because they only look after a small number of children. They often offer care that is continuous as well, looking after children before they are old enough to go to school and then looking after them before and after school."

The NCA has helped set up a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in early years childcare. "The benefit to parents is that childcare becomes like any other profession with an NVQ assessment in competence, a measure which parents can understand," Ms Haynes said. "Training would include child development and learning opportunities in the home. The NCA has also set up a number of childminding networks with local authorities which not only offer quality assurance - "a sort of kitemark for carers" - but also back-up, for example if the childminders' own children are ill."



"Our motivation is to raise the status of childminding as a major provider of childcare. The Government must have training and qualifications linked into national standards."

The NCA has helped set up a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in early years childcare. "The benefit to parents is that childcare becomes like any other profession with an NVQ assessment in competence, a measure which parents can understand," Ms Haynes said. "Training would include child development and learning opportunities in the home. The NCA has also set up a number of childminding networks with local authorities which not only offer quality assurance - "a sort of kitemark for carers" - but also back-up, for example if the childminders' own children are ill."

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People's favourite selected to fight Kohl

By Imre Karacs
in Bonn

THE MOST POPULAR politician in Germany was yesterday selected as the Social Democrat Party's candidate against Helmut Kohl in the federal elections in September.

On the eve of his party's formal nomination, Gerhard Schröder, 53, prime minister of Lower Saxony, passed the penultimate electoral test with flying colours. According to projections based on exit polls, his party won 47 per cent of the votes in yesterday's elections to the Hanover assembly, a gain of nearly 3 per cent.

It is the third time Mr Schröder has led the Social Democrats to victory in Germany's fourth most populous Land: each time with an improved score. In national polls, he is rated twice as popular as Chancellor Kohl.

It would be premature to discount Mr Kohl so early in the race. The exit polls showed the Christian Democrats had also improved on their result of four years ago, scoring about 38 per cent, up nearly 2 per cent.

For an election of such importance, the campaign was remarkable for its paucity of themes. In the shadow of Germany's record unemployment, nudging 5 million this month, the leading candidates wanted to talk of but one issue: joblessness.

Mr Schröder's rallies were festooned with slogans lambasting the government's poor record on jobs, stairways leading to the halls where the faithful gathered were plastered over with graphics illustrating the inexorable rise of unemployment in the 15 years of Kohl government.

In his speeches, Mr Schröder attacked the "laissez-faire" economics of Bonn, contrasting it with his own brand of interventionism. Earlier this year, he sank more than DM1bn (£330m) of tax-payers' money into a local steelworks, snatching it from a perfectly respectable Austrian suitor. It was to ensure that decisions about local jobs were made locally, Mr Schröder argued, and he pledged to restructure the company and eventually re-privatise it.

Critics suspected a cynical ploy, however, motivated by short-term political concerns. "Schröder saves jobs that aren't in any way in danger," said Christian Wulff, his Christian Democrat opponent. But the takeover appears to have served its purpose, polishing Mr Schröder's image as a hands-on manager who will go to any length to keep jobs at home.

Mr Wulff tried to counter the Keynesian argument by pointing out Lower Saxony's high indebtedness and poor employment record. But his campaign was on the defensive, because of the general feeling that Mr Kohl's lacklustre performance in Bonn was partly to blame for the country's economic malaise. His own prescriptions he could not advertise, for fear of offending his party bosses.

"My position is clear," he told journalists. "We are doing too little." When he was pinned down on specifics, Mr Wulff sounded more like his opponent than his mentor, Mr Kohl. The 38-year-old lawyer praised Tony Blair and the Dutch employment model, and gritted his teeth when asked to appraise Mr Kohl's economic achievement.

A superb organiser who rebuilt the party apparatus of his region after its first stunning defeat eight years ago, Mr Wulff has set his sights on the Chancellery, and is set to become a key player when the curtains finally fall on the Kohl era.

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Playing to win: John McEnroe on stage with his guitar during a tennis rock-night in Rotterdam at the weekend, in advance of the city's 25th international tournament - which starts today
Photograph: Toussaint Kluiters/AFIP

Seven die as Kosovo is torn by violence

PRISTINA (AP) — SERBIAN police swept through ethnic Albanian villages in the troubled province of Kosovo yesterday, after clashes at the weekend left at least seven people dead.

Ibrahim Rugova, the leader of the Kosovo Albanians who want to secede from Serbia, appealed to the United States and the European Union to put pressure on Belgrade to stop police violence.

Mr Rugova said "urgent

measures" were needed to prevent the Serb attacks which are aimed at "intimidating and causing panic" among the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo.

At least two Serb policemen were killed and another two wounded on Saturday, when their patrol was ambushed near the village of Glogovac, 12 miles west of province's capital, Pristina. In a subsequent action, the Serb police said they had killed five Albanian "terrorists."

The incidents represented the worst day of violence since the Kosovo Liberation Army surfaced in 1996. This clandestine ethnic Albanian militant group has claimed responsibility for several terrorist attacks that have left more than 30 people dead.

Both Serb and ethnic Albanian sources claim the death toll from the weekend clashes may have been much higher, after Serb police retaliated with helicopters and armored vehicles.

Ethnic Albanian sources said gunfire and explosions could still be heard yesterday around Glogovac and in nearby Srbica, the centre of ethnic Albanian disaffection in Kosovo.

The region is reportedly surrounded by Serb police forces conducting house-to-house searches. Tension has been high in Kosovo since Serbia revoked the province's autonomy and introduced virtual martial law in 1989.

ROME DIARY



Andrew Gumbel

ALL OVER town, posters are appearing with the slogan "Roma si muove meglio", Rome is getting moving. It sounds an attractive prospect in this sclerotic city of narrow medieval alleys and impatiently honking vehicles.

Strangely, the posters have coincided with a growing sensation that you can't actually move at all. The area of St Peter's and the Vatican has been closed to traffic for building work, snarling up access to the entire western half of the city. One side of the Circus Maximus has been roped off, and the other side is so clogged as a result that it is effectively a no-go area.

Stranger still, both the poster campaign and the roadworks are in aid of the same cause - the millennial jubilee, during which Rome expects 15 to 40 million visiting pilgrims to compound its already advanced urban dysfunction.

The theory behind the poster campaign is that the city will acquire lots of new road links, tunnels, car parks and public transport facilities, providing benefits that will far outweigh the inconveniences of the church's Holy Year.

The reality is that most of the major infrastructure projects have collapsed through incompetence, and the rest are so behind schedule that they are all having to start at the same time to leave even a chance they will be completed by the deadline of November 1999. With all of Rome's building site, the city's road users are becoming well-nigh murderous.

The bus drivers have already threatened a strike, and the traffic wardens have just gone through with one. Unfortunately, the protest method of choice is to organise a mass rally in Piazza Venezia, the hub of

the city and one of its busiest traffic junctions, and bring the whole of Rome to an even more grinding halt than usual.

Gore Vidal famously said he couldn't think of anywhere better than Rome to watch the world end. Me, I'm stocking up on dried pasta and tomato sauce and preparing to hunker down for the nuclear winter - hoping that by 2001 or so it will be safe to re-emerge.

Strapped for cash

TWO MORE reasons to feel apocalyptic. One, the neighbourhood cash dispensers have all decided to go on the blink together (not for the first time), and I only have enough cash in my pocket for a last thimbleful of black coffee. Two, even when the Bancomat machines are working, all they ever issue are 50,000 and 100,000 notes which are almost impossible to change. Try asking for a coffee or a kilo of artichokes and then proffering a red 50,000 note (just under £20).

As far as I know, this is a Roman problem. A few months ago, after having a coffee in Orvieto, as I strolled over to the cashier, I realised with horror I had only big notes. I adapted my habitual feel-sorry-for-me face, stooped over as if about to beg and cringingly held out my 50,000. "It's all right," the cashier said. "This isn't Rome, you know."

Language barrier

I'VE WRITTEN before about the Italian obsession with the English language, or rather the near-English with which they love to pepper their conversations and fill their newspaper columns.

The *Corriere della Sera* produced a clincher the other day in the first sentence of its review of the Kevin Kline sexual orientation comedy *In & Out* - surely the closest an Italian sentence can come to being an English sentence, without really being an English sentence. "In e Out non e' un gay movie underground." I that doesn't make much sense to you, imagine what an Italian must have made of it.

French don't believe their luck as economy starts to recover

FRANCE is stirring but it seems the French themselves cannot quite believe it.

Every indicator suggests the economy is on the threshold of a boom, or at least a very strong recovery this year. Consumers are spending, business is investing, exporters are exporting at record levels. Interest rates are low and inflation has almost ceased to exist (prices went DOWN slightly in January). France reached the targets for membership of economic and monetary union (Emu) last week, with some tricker, but without great pain.

There is even a good chance that France's high unemployment, which

John Lichfield reports from Paris on how ingrained pessimism disguises an unexpected return to prosperity

has been edging down for three months, could begin to shrink substantially in 1998. None the less, according to a Europe-wide poll, published last week, French consumers are by far the gloomiest in the European Union; 61 per cent said they expected no rapid improvement in their standard of living. Pessimism, it seems, has become ingrained in the French psyche.

In reality, France is more buoyant than it admits. There are three tell-tale signs. First, both the President Jacques Chirac and the Prime

Minister Lionel Jospin - but especially President Chirac - are waiving upwards in the opinion polls. Second, French consumers are consuming heavily for the first time in years (there was a 2.6 per cent jump in household purchases in January).

Thirdly, French business, which has been deeply, even ostentatiously, gloomy in public, is planning to invest in France in a big way in 1998.

An official survey found business would spend 10 per cent more on capital investment this year, three times the government's forecast.

French business leaders were rather embarrassed by these findings: they had been insisting that government proposals to move towards a 35-hour working week to create jobs would pull the plug on domestic and foreign investment.

The economy minister, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, whose sleight of hand and sureness of touch have contributed something to the recovery, said last week: "The outlook for economy and employment have not been so good for 30 years." That, as the minister no doubt calculated,

takes one back to 1968, the year of student and worker revolt which marked the end of the golden period of prosperity after the war.

Only 10 months ago, President Chirac called (and lost) a snap election partly because he thought the economy was going to nose-dive. Only six weeks ago, there were (exaggerated) predictions of mayhem on the streets when the far-left mobilised sustained protests by the long-time unemployed for the first time.

What has gone unexpectedly right?

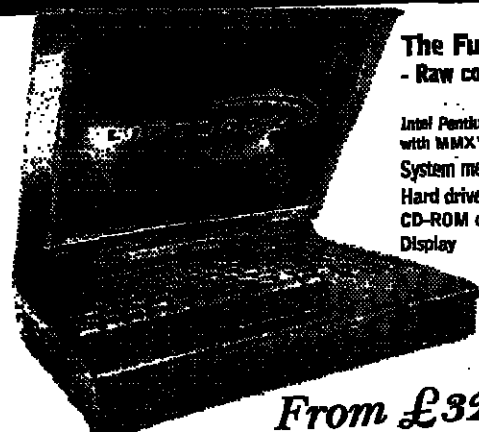
Firstly, there has been a recovery of consumer spending since the Jospin government came to power last June. The government is not responsible for the recovery: it was lucky. The most that can be said is that it ditched enough of its campaign promises to avoid killing a cyclical recovery, which had already begun.

Secondly, exports have continued to boom, thanks to a high dollar and the increasing competitiveness of French industry. One of the concerns for the strength of the recovery is that a large chunk of these exports -

especially in luxury goods - is Asian countries which abruptly themselves in difficulties. Econ ministry officials say the Asian crisis may dent the French recovery will not destroy it. They still see 3 per cent growth is possible this year. This would mean a substantial on the headline level of unemployment, already down to 12.1 per cent from 12.5 per cent a year ago.

Mr Strauss-Kahn warned at the weekend that France had an "ice seed-corn" too often in the past: ie, killed growth by excessive public spending and excessive savings. It must not happen again.

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Mandela takes the shine off Winnie's goldmine

by Mary Braid
Johannesburg

ELSON MANDELA is challenging the right of his former wife Winnie to pocket the profits she is making from their former home in Soweto.

Since Winnie Madikizela-Mandela opened the humble residence she once shared with her ex-husband to the public six months ago, it has proved a nice little earner.

Up to 1,000 tourists a day pay 5 rand (p) a head to visit the little house in Orlando West, while Mrs Mandela's sister runs a souvenir shop in the garage which sells items from the garden in little bottles at a bargain 10 rand.

The only problem is that Mrs Mandela does not own the house which she has turned into a museum. And now, according to the *Johannesburg Star* newspaper, Nelson Mandela wants her evicted from the house which he as the rightful owner has donated to the Soweto Heritage Trust, run by the township, tourism officials

and big business. "The President has said we should evict her because he gave the house to the people," said an embarrassed Sydney Phuti, the trust's deputy chairman. "It's a sensitive matter. We do not want to get an interdict to remove her from the house. We are trying to negotiate."

Mrs Mandela has not lived in the Orlando West house for years.

She prefers her luxury house in Diepkloof, Soweto's answer to Beverly Hills, which was built by an American benefactor. But the plaque now bolted to the outside wall of her old home reads "The Winnie Mandela and Family Museum" - making no mention of her ex-husband from whom she was divorced two years ago.

Nkomo Motlana, one of South Africa's most successful businessmen, has been called in to mediate.

But Mrs Mandela's lawyer, Ishmael Semenya - who represented her in the recent public hearings into her alleged involvement in the murder of Soweto

activists in the 1980s - suggested Mrs Mandela will fight any move to take away her control of the museum. He claimed Mrs Mandela lodged papers to have the house changed into her name back in 1985.

An ugly legal battle looks likely as the house was, in fact, only registered in the President's name at the beginning of last year.

He had not owned the house previously because under apartheid blacks were denied the right to possess freeholds.

The house plays central role in the Mandela saga. The couple lived there in the late 1950s and it was from there that Mr Mandela went underground and Mrs Mandela, a decade later, was banished from Soweto to the internal exile in the Free State.

But the house is also tainted by scandal. In 1988, angry Soweto residents burnt the house down in disgust at the violent activities of Mrs Mandela's notorious group of bodyguards, the so-called Mandela United Football Team. It has since been rebuilt.



Happier days: Nelson and Winnie Mandela after his release from jail in 1990. They were to divorce six years later

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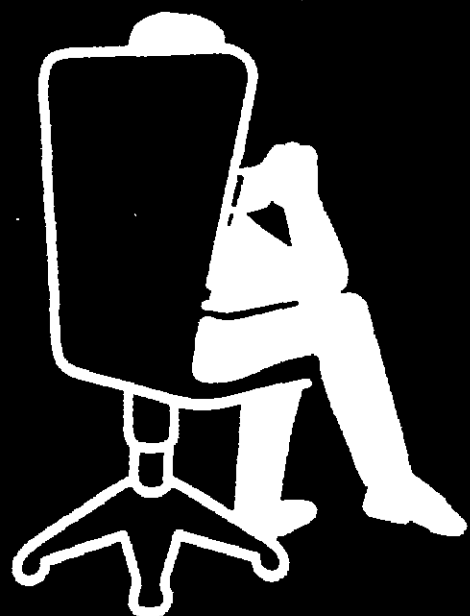
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Nigeria plays for status in Sierra Leone

By Ed O'Loughlin
in Freetown

WHEN forces acting in the name of democracy overthrow dictatorships, the international community is supposed to applaud. But when a Nigerian-led peace-keeping force chased Major Johnny Paul Koromaa's military junta from Freetown, the world responded with only a polite murmur.

Johnny Koromaa's eight-month-old regime took charge of Sierra Leone in a military coup and had earned a reputation for brutality, corruption and theft. The trouble is, the same things are often said of Nigeria.

Under General Sani Abacha's military rule, Nigeria has killed or imprisoned hundreds of dissidents. The execution of the ethnic Ogoni writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight fellow activists on charges of murder in 1993 was widely condemned abroad and provoked the United Nations, America and most Western countries, including Britain, into imposing limited sanctions.

But thanks to its ability to siphon off the country's massive oil wealth, Nigeria's ruling elite has felt able to defy the world. So, while no one mourns the passing of Major Koromaa and his thugs, now on the run in the north of the country, foreign diplomats in the region say their governments feel unable to congratulate Nigeria too publicly.

Some worry that Nigeria's hard-headed rulers may well be after more than Brownie points in Sierra Leone, which is still the dominant political and military power in West Africa. Many diplomats now believe the Sierra Leone operation could be part of a move to strengthen Nigeria's strategic position.

The expansion of Nigeria's

military presence in Sierra Leone comes at a time when it is reducing its peace-keeping force in neighbouring Liberia. Originally deployed in 1990, the multi-national force from the Economic Community of West African States (Ecomog) was dominated from the outset by Nigeria, which provided more than 10,000 troops. Sierra Leone has had its own peace-keepers from the group ever since the Liberian civil war spilled across the border in 1991.

Foreign observers believe this month's military offensive could have been intended to achieve several goals. Apart from securing a continued Nigerian presence in the western tip of Africa, it reinforced Nigeria's standing as the big player in Ecomog. It handed a rare, if muted, public relations victory to the military government in Nigeria and won Nigeria intense popularity with the inhabitants of Freetown.

It may also have guaranteed Nigeria's military elite a say in the future exploitation of Sierra Leone's mineral wealth. Apart from big deposits of bauxite and titanium dioxide, the diamond fields around Kono are estimated to yield gems worth more than £150m a year.

The real question is how dependent the restored President Kabbah will be on Nigerian soldiers to uphold his rule. Major Koromaa's ousted army is already mounting bloody raids on the cities in the interior. According to Ecomog's Nigerian chief of staff General Abdu One Mohammad, the peace-keepers plan to pursue them into the bush and wipe them out.

"If you have a snake and you just hit the tail you are wasting your time," he said. "You have to hit the head as well."

Forty arrested in Burma

Burma's military regime has arrested 40 people it accuses of planning to bomb government buildings and embassies and assassinate the country's leaders.

A government spokesman, Colonel Kyaw Thein, said yesterday that the plot was masterminded by the All Burma Students Democratic Front, made up of former students who fled the suppression of a pro-democracy uprising in 1988. Kyaw Thein, a member of the regime's information committee, told a news conference that the student insurgents were linked to the party of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

— AP, Rangoon

UN chief pleads for Rushdie

Mary Robinson, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said she raised the issue of the death order against British author Salman Rushdie in talks with the Iranian Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi. Mrs Robinson, in discussions this weekend with Mr Kharrazi and Iran's deputy minister for legal and international affairs, Mohammad Javad Zarif, said Rushdie's situation was the only specific case she had raised in talks on a broad range of human rights issues.

— Reuters, Tehran

Sect seeks newborn sons

An ultra-orthodox Jewish sect is searching for parents willing to hand over newborn sons to be raised in isolation and purity in preparation for the rebuilding in Jerusalem of the Biblical Temple, which was destroyed in 70AD. Only members of the Jewish priestly caste need apply, the *Ha'aretz* newspaper quoted a leader of the Movement for Establishing the Temple as saying.

— Reuters, Jerusalem

صوتنا من الاجل

Tiananmen tyrant rises to the top

Teresa Poole
Hong Kong

PENG, the man who played a key role in crushing the Tiananmen protests in 1989, looks to take over as head of China's next parliament despite protests in the provinces.

Peng have been mounting a bid across China against pro-reform activists in the last few years after outspoken attacks on Mr. The outgoing prime minister in 1997 imposed martial law and the suppression of the pro-reform movement. "He has the old guard people on his hands," an open letter from activists in Jiangsu province, two of whom have been questioned by police. "We call him NPC (parliament) not to vote him as he already has a place in history of China's humiliation."

A petition signed by 56 relatives of students killed in the 1989 shoot-out. "We earnestly ask the NPC leadership review committee to justify him." More than a dozen petitions have been issued this week. They demand reforms and a re-examination of the official verdict of the events of 1989 as "counter-revolutionary".

The parliament, which opens next week will appoint Zhu Rongji, a chief economic policy-maker, the new prime minister and lay ground for big cuts in the civil service and government ministries. But it is Mr Li's move to the top of the government that is the most controversial, because the appointment will be seen as a step backwards for any

chance of political reform.

Human rights groups in Hong Kong at the weekend said three more dissidents had been detained recently. In Shanghai police took away Yang Qinheng and Zhang Rujun, who signed a petition calling for the release of political prisoners. Ma Lianggang, in the central city of Hefei, was picked up on Saturday. It was not clear if these arrests were connected with the alleged for-



Li Peng: Appointment has brought flurry of protests

mation of an underground political group opposing Communist party rule. A New York-based dissident, Fu Shengqi, said the "China Democratic Justice Party" had been set up with more than 100 members and five to 10 branches based in provinces and cities.

Mr Fu said the party had intended to meet in a northern Chinese city towards the end of February, but that the plan had been

scrapped after Wang Bingzhang, an exiled dissident who returned secretly from the United States in January to help set up the party, was arrested and expelled.

Security is so tight ahead of the People's Congress that it would be an extraordinary achievement to organise an underground group without tipping off the police. "Tolerance for public political debate is at rock-bottom in China in the run-up to the meeting, even though petitioning the parliament is," in theory legal.

Under the constitution, Mr Li must step down as prime minister at this parliament after two five-year terms. But the hardliner will remain the second most powerful man in China's political hierarchy, and President Jiang Zemin has had to accommodate his demands for a significant new post. Mr Li's preferred choice was to be head of the NPC.

The outgoing chairman of parliament is Qiao Shi, 73, whose political career hit a brick wall last autumn when he was dumped from the politburo standing committee. Despite his past role as China's top secret policeman, he was credited with building up the role of the NPC from that of a mere rubber stamp.

Resistance to Mr Li's appointment may be significant in the parliament itself, as delegates have become less compliant. At last year's NPC, about 40 per cent of deputies dared either to vote against, or abstain, on the report from China's top legal officer. A repeat rebellion against Mr Li's appointment as NPC head would be a huge loss of face.

Taking tea in the town that's in the drink



Washed out: Women taking breakfast in a flooded street in Milagro in Ecuador yesterday. The coastal town is a sugar cane centre and it is feared the heavy rain attributed to the El Nino weather pattern may have destroyed the crop. Photograph: Andres Rendon/Reuters

Suharto makes sure of his next election victory

By Richard Lloyd Parry



Suharto: Sole candidate for Indonesia's presidency

PRESIDENT Suharto of Indonesia yesterday convened an assembly of tame supporters to re-elect him for his seventh consecutive term and with even greater powers than before. Despite presiding over the country's worst economic crisis for 40 years, President Suharto is certain of being elected for another five-year term by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), which meets in the capital Jakarta until the middle of next week.

Almost all the members have been chosen or approved by him, decision-making is by "consensus" rather than by voting and, in any case, he is the sole candidate. The only person to have declared her willingness to stand against him, the opposition figure, Megawati

Sukarnoputri, was ousted from parliament last year and is therefore disqualified from standing.

The assembly meets at a time of exceptional unease in Indonesia, which has suffered in the last seven months from an intensifying series of catastrophes - a currency crisis which has reduced the value of the rupiah by 70 per cent, forest fires, smog, drought, soaring inflation, mass lay-offs, aircraft crashes, food riots and the looting of Chinese shops.

Today, the former United States vice-president, Walter Mondale, will arrive in Jakarta as President Bill Clinton's personal envoy to Mr Suharto in an attempt to encourage political and economic reform.

Public demonstrations have been banned for the duration of the MPR's deliberations, which is likely to grant the President sweeping emergency powers.

A Manila newspaper reported a conversation between President Suharto and the Philippines foreign minister in which the President expressed fears of a "revolution" if the price of rice rose further. Indonesia's South-East Asian neighbours are already said to be making plans for the possible overthrow of Indonesian leaders if the food situation continues to decline.

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Troops and personnel carriers are stationed outside the parliament building, and some 35,000 troops and police have been mobilised.

Also in question is the future of the \$43bn (£27bn) rescue package put together by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stabilise the crippled economy. Ever since it was negotiated last year, Mr Suharto has appeared reluctant to implement its measures, which are designed to increase competitiveness in a market hitherto dominated by a few rich businessmen, many of them friends or relatives of the President.

"Despite the fact that we already have started to carry out clear and fundamental reforms and a restructuring program, there are no signs yet that the situation has improved," the In-

donesian leader said in his televised speech to the MPR yesterday. "On the contrary, the people's life is becoming more difficult."

His latest idea, for a currency board which would peg the value of the rupiah to that of the US dollar, provoked deep unease at the IMF which threatened to suspend its aid if the plan was put into action. Yesterday, President Suharto announced a new plan, called "IMF plus" regarded by him and his advisers as "more appropriate" to Indonesia's problems, but unlikely to be welcomed by the international community. "If Suharto does not carry out the necessary reforms and stick to the plan," a US official told reporters last on Friday, "we will line up very strongly against the delivery of the next tranche."

Saddam's honesty on weapons sites to be put to test

By David Usborne
in New York

THE SINCERITY of Iraq's commitment to the new agreement on opening presidential palaces to inspections by United Nations weapons inspectors that for now has averted American and British military action in the Gulf could be tested as early as this week.

Richard Butler, the chairman of Unscop, the Special Commission charged with dismantling Iraq's weapons programmes, yesterday said he was "just about to ready" to begin implementation of the pact that was negotiated by Secretary General Kofi Annan on a make-or-break mission to Iraq a week ago.

The United States has served notice that it wants the agreement tested as soon as possible. To do so, Mr Butler will only need to order an inspection of at least one of the eight presidential complexes that are at the heart of the deal with Iraq.

Under the provisions of the agreement, which has come under searing attack in the US Congress, inspectors from Unscop will be accompanied into the palaces by diplomats acting as observers.

In New York this morning, meanwhile, the UN Security Council will attempt to resolve diplomatic differences between the five permanent members on a formal resolution that would give legal and diplomatic endorsement to Mr Annan's deal. An initial version of a text drafted by Britain, which

warned Iraq it would face the "severest consequences" if it reneged on the new agreement, has already been watered down. The latest text says instead that Iraq would face "very severe consequences".

Behind the seemingly petty squabbling in the Council, lie fundamental differences of view on how to handle Iraq. While the US and Britain are unrelenting in taking the toughest possible stance against Saddam Hussein, France, Russia and China are at every turn more flexible.

Specifically on this resolution, the latter three do not want wording that would open the door to automatic military action against Iraq were it to be found in violation of the Annan agreement. Any such action, they say, should be preceded by further consultations in the Council.

Asked by journalists yesterday about his progress on finalising arrangements for adding diplomatic chaperones to the regular Unscop teams, Mr Butler replied: "We are at work on that, and we are just about ready." He insisted that while diplomats would join inspection teams, the "hard edge" would remain the scientific and technical experts.

An opinion poll to be published today by *Newsweek* magazine shows broad approval among Americans of the deal struck with Iraq: 55 per cent said they considered the Annan deal "worth it". Even so, 61 per cent expressed the view that the agreement will not work in the long run.

Israel fears Palestinians are stocking up arms for a war

ISRAEL suspects Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority is stocking up on weapons in case the failing peace process disintegrates into violent clashes between the two security forces, writes Eric Silver in Jerusalem.

Israel's suspicions were bolstered yesterday after Israeli soldiers captured a Palestinian smuggler ferrying two rubber dinghies of arms and ammunition across the Dead Sea from Jordan on Friday night. The massive haul included 60 Kalashnikov and M-16 rifles, seven hunting rifles, 39 pistols and dozens of boxes of bullets.

The Palestinian leader has repeatedly threatened a return to armed confrontation if Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government fails to honour its commitment to hand over more of the West Bank to Palestinian rule. The paramilitary Palestinian police number about 30,000 men, but Israel controls the legal import of light weapons via Jordan and Egypt.

The chief of Israel's central command, Major-General Uzi Dayan, said they were investigating the possibility that the commitment was destined for the Palestinian Authority. One officer said it was "too much and too well-organised" for mere criminals or Islamic extremists.

The smuggler came ashore at Ein Fashka, 10 miles from Jericho, headquarters of the Palestinians' West Bank security forces.

The Jordanian army was combing the eastern shore. On Saturday five of its officers crossed the water to inspect the cache. Their commander confirmed that the two forces were working together. This was welcomed by Israel as a renewal of security co-operation facilitated by the resignation last week of the head of the Mossad secret service, General Danny Yatom, whom King Hussein blamed for the bungled attempt to assassinate a Hamas leader in Amman last September.

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Hindu hardliners lead in India poll

NEW DELHI (AP) — Officials yesterday carried sealed ballot boxes to heavily guarded locations across the country to prepare for the counting of votes for India's next government.

Counting begins today for most constituencies. Two exit polls released on Saturday indicated strong support for Hindu nationalists.

More than 300 million of India's 600 million voters have cast ballots in the election, which has been staggered over six days to give security forces time to move across a country where religious, ethnic and caste differences often erupt into violence.

Despite the precautions,

blood has been spilled on each of the four voting days since 16 February. Eight people were killed in election-related violence on Saturday, bringing the death toll to at least 76.

Voting ended on Saturday for all but six of the 543 contested seats in parliament.

First results are not expected until late today. No party is expected to win an outright majority in the powerful lower house of parliament. But a poll broadcast on the government-run television showed the Hindu BJP and its allies winning 244 seats, making gains in almost every corner of the country but still falling short of a majority.

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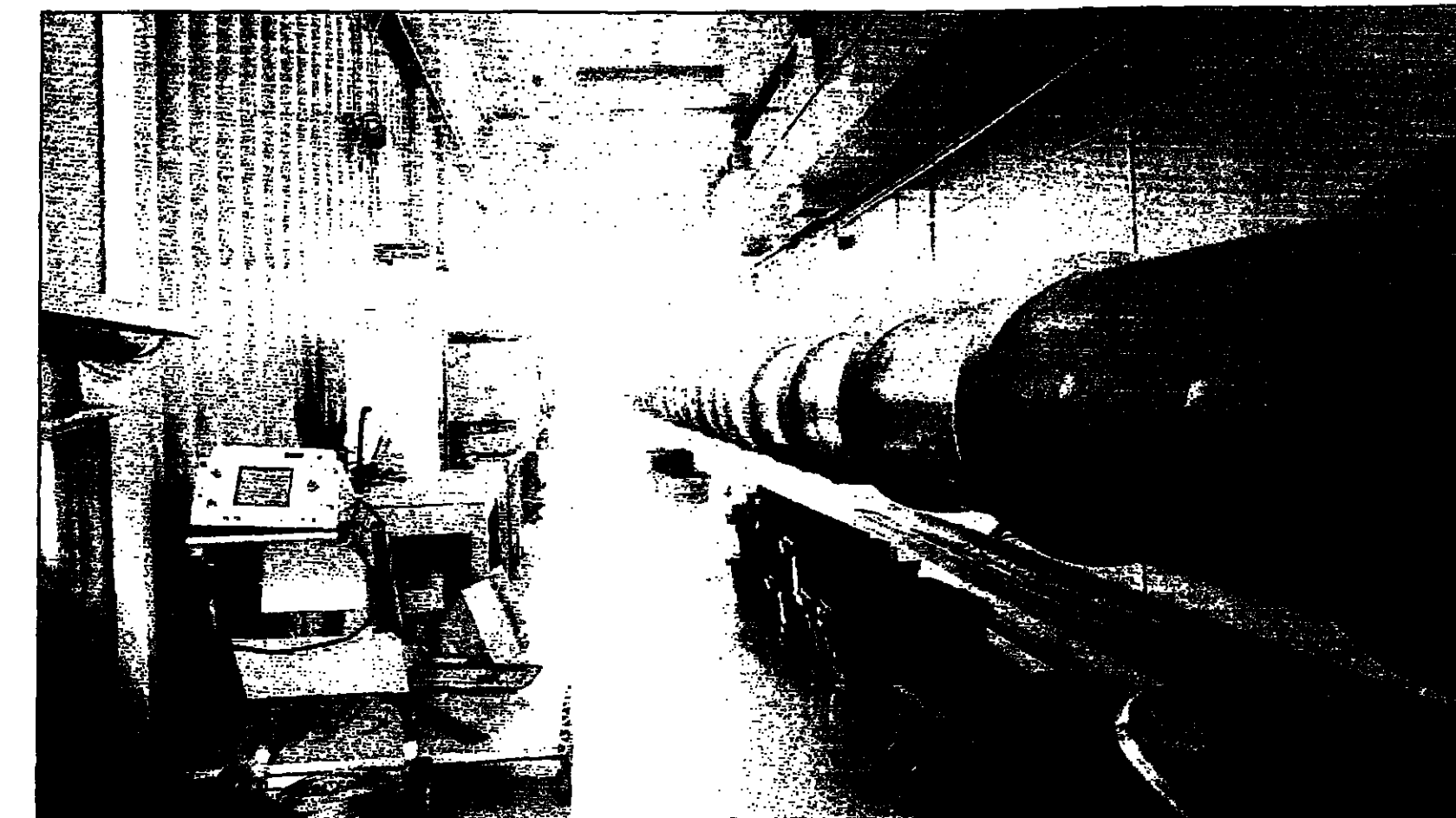
We have light waves, radio waves and, according to Einstein, we should have gravitational waves. Dan Falk reports on a multi-million-pound project that may finally prove the theory right

NO FORCE in the universe is more familiar than gravity. It keeps our feet firmly on the ground, it keeps the moon and planets in their respective orbits, and it keeps galaxies and clusters of galaxies bound in close-knit cosmic families. Some 300 years after a falling apple supposedly triggered Isaac Newton's first insights into gravity, you'd think we'd have it all figured out. And, to be sure, we do know quite a few of the details. Eighty years ago, Albert Einstein formulated the modern description of gravity – the general theory of relativity – and most of its many predictions were confirmed experimentally in the decades that followed.

But one key prediction of relativity remains untested. According to Einstein, a massive object, under certain conditions, should emit gravitational waves. These waves, a fall-out from the equations of general relativity, should be traversing the universe at the speed of light, emanating from any spot where massive objects are throwing their weight around. Because they're so weak, however, gravitational waves have so far eluded detection.

That may change in the early years of the next decade, when a number of gravitational-wave observatories begin operation. The largest of these projects consists of a pair of detectors now under construction in the US. The project is known as LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory) and, if successful, will open a new window on the universe.

But what, exactly, is a gravitational wave? The best way to picture one is by analogy. Suppose you're standing by the edge of a pond. You lean over, put your hand in the water, and move it back and forth. The result is a series of waves that spread out in a circular pattern. Just over a century ago, scientists found that electromagnetic waves work in a similar way: if you take an electric charge and move it back and forth (technically, you're accelerating it) then electromagnetic waves radiate outward in a similar pattern. Radio waves are one example of electromagnetic radiation; light is another. And, according to general relativity, an accelerating mass produces gravitational waves in just the same fashion.



The 40-metre prototype LIGO detector at Caltech, precursor to the gravitational-wave observatories now under construction

Photograph: Dan Falk

activity, an accelerating mass produces gravitational waves in just the same fashion.

"In Einstein's language, gravity is associated with a warpage of space-time," explains Kip Thorne, a physicist at the California Institute of Technology. "So these gravitational waves are in fact a warpage of space-time." Gravitational waves, Thorne says, are like ripples in the very fabric of the universe, stretching and shrinking space itself as they pass by.

So why hasn't anyone seen these ripples?

The answer hinges on gravity's inherent weakness. Gravity, in fact, is weaker than the electromagnetic force by a factor of 10 to the power 39 (that's a one followed by 39 noughts). So while the motion of each of the planets around the sun, for example, would theoretically produce gravitational waves, the effects would be far too small to detect. Instead, the LIGO project will be on the lookout for gravitational waves from some of the most energetic phenomena in the universe – objects such as rapidly-revolving pairs of neutron stars, colliding black holes, and supernova explosions.

Though gravitational waves still await

experimental detection, physicists already have good reason to believe they exist. Starting in the mid-1970s, two American astrophysicists, Joseph Taylor and Russell Hulse, made careful observations of a star system called a binary pulsar, which is a pair of small, dense stars revolving rapidly around one another. According to general relativity, the pair should radiate energy in the form of gravitational waves, and this, in turn, should cause the two stars to slow down in their orbits.

Over the years, measurements showed that the pair were indeed losing energy, and at precisely the rate predicted by the theory. Taylor and Hulse shared the 1993 Nobel Prize for Physics for their work.

"It gave unequivocal proof – in my mind, at least – that gravitational waves exist, and that they have the properties predicted by general relativity," says Stan Whitcomb, a physicist at Caltech who is the detector group leader for the LIGO project. "We know that the waves are out there."

But even detecting the gravitational waves from powerful cosmic sources such as binary pulsars will be a tremendous challenge. That's why the LIGO project, from the beginning, has been about size: even compared to the largest detectors being planned in other countries, the American project, administered by Caltech and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is a giant. The \$360m (£225m) project is funded by the US National Science Foundation.

Each of the LIGO detectors is being built in the shape of a giant "L" – two long, vacuum-filled tubes, 4km (2.5 miles) in length, meeting at a right angle. Quartz weights, each of 10kg (22lb) will be suspended at the end of each arm, and at the "elbow". Powerful lasers will send a beam of light down the length of each arm of the "L", reflecting off mirrors mounted on the weights.

Using an interferometer, the two laser beams are later combined into one. When a gravitational wave passes by, one of the detector's arms will be momentarily stretched, while the other will shrink. That change in length will be very slight – about one hundred times smaller than the width of an atomic nucleus. That should be enough, however, to pull the two laser

beams out of phase and register a distinctive interference pattern at the spot where the laser beams merge.

By using two separate detectors – one in the state of Washington and one in Louisiana – any false readings at either location should be screened out.

The gravitational-wave detectors of the 21st century will show us a greatly enriched view of the cosmos. But, as with any new observing scheme, there will almost certainly be surprises. "It's not an instrument for the precise study of things that we already know about," says Whitcomb, "but a survey instrument to see things that we've never encountered in the past – signals that perhaps we've not expected at all." For it's worth pointing out that some people have suggested that rather than using radio or light waves to make their presence known, alien intelligences might signal their advanced state by communicating with gravitational, rather than electromagnetic waves. First, though, you have to catch your wave.

Dan Falk is a science journalist based in Toronto, Canada.

TECHNOQUEST

Elephants, giraffes and Shuttle trash

Questions for this column can be submitted to sci.net@campus.bt.com

How big is the biggest elephant?
The Science Museum has records of an elephant that was 4.10 metres high and weighed an amazing 10.7 tonnes. But on average African elephants weigh around 5.6 tonnes, and are about 3.2 metres high.

What is a planetary nebula?
Nebulae form at the end of a star's life. When a star runs out of its basic fuel, hydrogen, it starts burning its waste – helium. This raises the temperature, and the internal pressure, which makes the star expand – but this expansion lowers the temperature and pressure, so the star's gravity makes it contract again. This cycle repeats until the star "pulses" rapidly, and begins throwing out its mass from its surface in a "superwind". It blows in gusts which rip the envelope of gas from the star in just 1,000 years. The expelled material forms an expanding shell of gas heated by a hot core. Astronomers call this a "planetary nebula" because, seen through a basic telescope, it looks like a planet with moons round it. The hot core looks like the central star of the nebula, which will keep expanding until it dissipates.

How many vertebrae does a giraffe have?
Our backbones are made up of several small bones called vertebrae. Even though a giraffe is much taller than we are, they have exactly the same number of vertebrae – just 24. The difference is, theirs are rather larger in every dimension.

What do they do with rubbish in the Shuttle?
Bring it all back, including what's in the toilet – except the urine, which is often dumped overboard. Rubbish is carefully stowed in containers and the US space agency NASA is currently developing a "trash-compactor".

You can visit the Technoquest site at <http://www.campus.bt.com/Campus-World/SciNet/SciNet.htm>. Questions and answers provided by Science Line's Dial-a-Scientist, 0345 600444.

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THEORETICALLY ...

Dutch halt cloning research
No sooner had the scientists from Pharming, a Dutch biotechnology company, shown off their two cloned calves last Friday than they were told by their government that the method used to create them would be outlawed.

The identical female calves, produced by the embryo nuclear transfer method first used in Britain to produce the cloned sheep Morag and Megan a year before Dolly, were front-page news in Holland. Pharming said the embryos were frozen before and after the cloning. But the Dutch Agriculture Ministry has decided to ban the technique. "The method has not been proved necessary. There is no scientific purpose," said ministry spokesman Paul van der Brug. To which Frank Pieper, Pharming's vice-president of research and technology, said: "The knowledge we've gained

doesn't go away. We can still collaborate with other countries." The company has joint ventures in the US and Belgium.

Hawking speaks for Clinton
Stephen Hawking, the famous cosmologist, will address 160 guests at the second of President Bill Clinton's "millennium evenings" on Friday at the White House. The author of *A Brief History of Time* and Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University will speak on "science in the next millennium". Aged 56 and almost paralysed by motor neurone disease, his lecture will be delivered via that familiar voice synthesizer. A glimpse of his opinions? "The next century will bring big changes. Most visions of the future show a society with very advanced science and technology, but in an unchanging state. I question this picture. I think it is more likely that biological and electron-

ic complexity will increase at an ever more rapid rate."

Parkinson's gene discovery
Gene of the week is one found by German researchers, who reckon they have found a second gene linked with the incurable brain illness Parkinson's disease. A study of three families with members who had the disease found a common mutation on chromosome 2, the researchers reported in this month's *Nature Genetics*. They said the gene "appears to be involved in the development of Parkinsonism closely resembling sporadic (non-familial) Parkinsonism including a similar mean age of onset (59 years)." The first gene linked to familial Parkinson's was only found last year, by an American team. Increasingly, it looks like Parkinson's has strong genetic components – but environmental causes are not ruled out.

New clues on Alzheimer's
And another gene: this one, for Alzheimer's. An American team, also writing in *Nature Genetics*, say the two forges (A and G) of the gene which controls production of the enzyme bleomycin hydrolase (BH), confer different risks of developing the degenerative brain disease. People with two copies of the "G" form have about twice the normal risk of developing Alzheimer's, according to the research. It's one of a handful of genes found since 1993 to be a risk factor for the disease.

So what does bleomycin hydrolase do? No one's sure. Yeasts have it, people have it, and one thing it does is activate a compound known as bleomycin, used in cancer chemotherapy. After that? Well, it affects your susceptibility to Alzheimer's ...

Charles Arthur, Science Editor

Pre-teen mums – it's all down to diet

TELL ME ABOUT ... FAT AND PUBERTY

NEWSPAPERS aren't putting it on when they express amazement that in the US and Europe girls as young as 10 can (and do) conceive and give birth to healthy babies. A century ago, it would have been unusual for someone so young to have begun menstruating; and incredible for a foetus to survive to term.

So what has happened? Despite what the *Daily Mail* may say, moral erosion is not the cause. Instead, it's economic prosperity, and with it the better diets – and especially fat-rich foods.



Jenny Teague, Britain's youngest mum Photograph: PA

Quite which comes first, the fat collection or the puberty, isn't completely clear: it may be that the hormones released in puberty accelerate fat collection. Anyway, in modern Western societies, there are plenty of cheap, fatty foods available which will allow a young body to store

enough fat to be ready to reproduce. As a result, the records for "youngest mother" have been falling in the US and Europe for years. Last December, Britain's youngest mother (pictured) gave birth aged 11: she had conceived aged 10.

In fact the link between fat and puberty may come down to a single gene – the so-called "fat gene", leptin, which leads to the production of a hormone that has been linked with obesity, and seems to regulate the level of body fat and appetite.

Last week researchers reported studies on a Turkish family which showed that where the leptin gene was mutated, not only were the family members obese, but their sexual development was disrupted too. One of the women never had menstrual periods, but family members who had one or no copies of the mutant gene had normal body weight and sexual development.

This "suggests that leptin not only controls body mass but may also be a necessary signal for the initiation of human puberty", said the researchers. So maybe it is fat first, then puberty. CA

The storm before Mr Calm



DEBORAH ROSS
TALKS TO
PAUL WILSON

OK, THEN, Paul Wilson, author of *The Little Book of Calm* – that teenie-weenie, pocket-sized thing that's been a major best-seller here for an irritatingly long time – let's cut to the quick. You're in the supermarket. You are, as ever, pressed horrifically for time. You've joined the queue which you think is going to be the fastest, but of course turns out to be the slowest. Then, the mad old lady in front of you suddenly decides she's going to pay for her single lamb chop with a mixture of milk bottle tops and out-of-date coupons for 10p off Persil. Inside, you are raging: "COME ON! COME ON! COME ON! COME ON! COME ON! YOU STUPID OLD LADY! I'VE GOT A STROKE TO GET HOME FOR!" Paul, what would you advise in these circumstances?

"Well," says Paul, who has great, Hollywood-mauve hair and is dressed entirely in beautiful, black Armani, "firstly, avoid queues". That's not entirely realistic, is it? "OK, secondly, allow twice as long as you think it's going to take. That way, your impatience won't get the better of you." And that's it? "It's simple. But it works," Paul? "Yes?" Have you every thought about bringing out *The Really Big Book of Calm*?

"No. Why?" Well, then you could use it to crack the old lady over the head and have done with her. "I see," says Paul. He has quite a tight, pinched mouth for someone who is meant to be so relaxed about things. It tightens even more. I think he might think I am not entering into the spirit of things.

I can see why *The Little Book of Calm* sells. It's pale yellow and blue with a picture of a fluffy cloud on the front. It's the

relaxing as wearing no shoes at all"; investing in a well-stocked fruit bowl ("eat more fruit and you'll feel more relaxed – it's as sweet as that"); patting something ("share your life with a pet, and you'll have an appreciative assistant in your efforts to become calm"); plus lots more happy-clappy guff. "Smile, even when you don't feel like it." "Declare today a holiday!" (I wish). Personally, I find more nourishment in a Kit-Kat, but a great many people go in for this sort of thing.

Paul's in the middle of a book tour. He's got a proper-sized, new book out, called *Calm At Work*. As part of its promotion, he's been giving talks up and down the country. I go to one held in a church in Pledgely. I had expected to see a lot of sads in beards. Admittedly, there are one or two women wearing things that look terrifyingly hand-crocheted, plus a couple of men whose anoraks are significantly shorter than their suit jackets. But, mostly, the 100 or so who turn up seem quite a smart lot. Some are even laden with Tiffany and Fortnum & Mason carrier bags. They listen attentively to Paul's advice on breathing techniques – breath deep, breath slow, listen to your breath. They are told to sell their wristwatches, that stress is only about how you look at things, that "within everyone is the power to be calm".

Paul has a very slow, soft, relaxing sort of voice. It's hard not to doze off. Afterwards, there is a long queue for signed copies of his books. "So interesting," says a crocheted top. "So helpful," adds the short anorak. "Now, help me," I say to Paul, when we get down to the interview proper in a hotel. And I really do want him to sort me out. If he can.

Yes, I'm a terrible worrier. Hopeless. Every time I leave the house I worry I've left the iron on, even though I don't have an iron. I do the stress test at the beginning of *Calm At Work*. A reasonable score is 0-35. I get 145. I tell this to Paul. I tell him 'Tai Chi is all very well, but it's a bugger when you're on the mobile. Perhaps I should write *The Little Book of Stress*, with a picture of a blue-lipped me after my stroke on the cover? What do you think? "I think you should learn to worry less." How? How? Tell me NOW!

Well, he says, most worries are future-oriented. They'll probably never come about. I'm wasting my time worrying about them. What I should do is write down every worry as it occurs to me during the day. Then, at the same time each day – say, 6.10pm, providing I haven't sold my watch yet – I should have 15 minutes of worry time. Chuck out the worries that are erroneous, have a good worry about the ones

'I worried all the time. At 25, I was getting palpitations, chest pains. Then the art director I was working with had a stroke. He was 32. That's what really brought it home to me'

sort of cloud you think you remember from childhood, from those long, perfect summer days that, of course, never actually happened, although it's soothing to think they did. The book is just 4in x 3in in size, costs £1.99, and is so cute it's almost edible. It tends to be stacked by the tills in book shops. It's the sort of thing you buy without ever intending to, like a Kit-Kat at the garage when you only meant to get petrol. So far, 607,245 people in the UK have bought it. (Usually, 100,000 is considered a bestseller.) It's been in the bestseller list for 57 weeks, hitting the top spot six times. Sales show absolutely no sign of abating.

Inside, the book is full of thoughts to inspire, moment-sized nuggets designed to set you on the path to inner peace. Apparently, the route to true tranquillity lies in wearing comfortable shoes ("almost as

that aren't, then stop. I'm not sure how this gets the mortgage paid, or my self-assessment tax forms filled in, but it sounds good. Frankly, I think a lot of what Paul says is just "cheer up, love, it may never happen", very cleverly marketed.

Paul, it should be remembered, is first and foremost a marketing man. He is head of an advertising agency in Sydney. This calm business is his hobby. His job is to sell things to people. He says to me later I shouldn't take the stress test seriously. "It's just a bit of a game, really. A bit of interactivity to get the reader involved." A play? "Yes," Paul's not a con man. A bit vain, yes. "Any nice articles to show me?" he asks the PR girl from Penguin. He drinks water constantly because "it smoothes the skin". But he strikes me as a good bloke, mostly.

Paul Wilson, 48, was born in Ilfracombe.



Wilson's *The Little Book of Calm* has sold more than 600,000 in the UK and has been a bestseller for more than a year

Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

Not the Devon Ilfracombe, but Ilfracombe in Queensland, in the Australian bush. Ilfracombe, he says, is the driest permanently inhabited place on earth. A couple of days of rain a year is considered good going. When he was growing up, rain was the cause of great celebration. He still loves rain, and the scent of rain. He takes a negative ioniser with him wherever he goes to give a room a "just rained, clean feel to it". I say I always take a packet of Dunhill wherever I go. This always gives a room a lovely, about-to-drop-dead-from-lung-cancer sort of feel to it. He gives me another of his pained, tight-around-the-mouth, little looks.

His father, Ron, was a truck driver. His mother, Kath, was a worrier. His father needed only to be a minute late and he'd been killed in a car crash. Paul wasn't such a worrier. Not back then, anyway. He liked to sit for hours under the acacia tree just outside the town. He liked the silence. He day-dreamed. He imagined. He was meditating, he says, although he didn't know it then.

When he was 11, he entered an Eisteddfod in Rockhampton, a town of 100,000. He entered not only the under-13s competition, but the under-15s and under-17s too. He was a boy from the bush, and didn't understand you didn't have to sign up for everything. He wasn't an especially gifted trumpet player, he says, but he nevertheless won all the competitions. He did this by "imagining I was playing from a very calm place" before going on to perform. "Your imagination is more powerful than anything else," he says. In many ways, Paul's calm theories may just be dressed up, how-to-be-a-success-theories. Paul eventually went into advertising. By 25, he was creative director of an up-and-coming ad agency. "I was responsible

for the company's creative reputation. I was responsible for a staff of 40 people. I worried all the time. It began to affect my health. At 25, I was getting palpitations, chest pains. Then the art director I was working with had a stroke. He was 32. That's what really brought it home to me."

He knew he had to learn to relax. He remembered what it was like sitting under that acacia tree, and tried to recapture that. He travelled to China, Tibet, Korea, Japan, to meet Buddhist monks and the like, and supplement his knowledge. He

thoughts, read the calming thoughts submitted by others. "Try colouring in. It's so relaxing," suggests Liz from Cambridge University, which makes you wonder about the standard of undergraduates these days. You can even e-mail a calm moment to a loved one. (I e-mail a calm moment to my loved one: "Select your company well. Mix with calm people." He calls to say: "That's all very well, but meanwhile I'm stuck with you.") I ask Paul if we don't all need some anxiety. In some ways, it may even be the motor that keeps us going.

of an example. Would he have been able to do what he did if he'd been a less wounded-up kind of chap? "Van Gogh is the world's greatest failure. He did all this work, but died never knowing if any of it was any good or not. He died a failure. He never sold a painting in his lifetime." Excellent paintings, though. "There is this sentimental argument that as he left a body of work behind, it makes it all right somehow. But it doesn't. It was irrelevant to Van Gogh, who had a very unhappy life."

I wonder, do you ever worry, Paul? "Of course. I am on the board of a hospital back home, and one is always worrying about resources." No, I mean a proper worry, like if I don't do my self-assessment form this week the house will fall down and my child will be taken into care and my legs will drop off and what's in the fridge? Do I need to get milk on my way home? Luckily, he says, his wife – who has given up work to look after their two young children – "looks after all that". I wonder, is she a 10-to-nine mum, like me? I'm lovely until 10 to nine. It's all who wants an egg? Who wants yummy porridge? But then it's 10 to nine and I'm screaming: "Shoes! Find your bloody shoes! It's swimming! Why didn't you tell me earlier it's swimming!" He says his wife does this too. "We've tried starting everything half-an-hour earlier, but it just doesn't work." So he doesn't have the answers to everything, which is encouraging.

I leave him quite late in the evening, and go out on to the street to get a taxi. It's raining. There aren't any taxis. I'm late. The babysitter is going to murder me. I do my breathing exercises. In-out, in-out, very, very slowly. I listen to my own breath. I find my inner calm. And only then do I rage: "COME ON! COME ON! YOU STUPID TAXI!"

Calm At Work, published by Penguin, £7.99.

He takes a negative ioniser wherever he goes to give a room a "just rained, clean feel to it". I say I always take a packet of Dunhill for an about-to-drop-dead-from-lung-cancer feel

started giving talks to other creative ad people about becoming calm. Someone suggested he should write a book about it. He wrote *The Calm Technique* – the biggest selling book of its type – then *Instant Calm*, which has also been an international bestseller. *The Little Book of Calm* was an offshoot from *Instant Calm*. "As I was writing it, all these little thoughts came to me, which I thought would make a nice little book in themselves." Have the books made him very rich? "I am comfortable, yes, but I don't do it for the money."

His calm industry seems to just spawn and spawn. He runs a non-profit-making Calm Centre in Sydney, peopled by researchers and psychologists. There are no plans for *Calm, The Movie* as of yet, but there is a much-visited web site. Here, you can visit the meditation room, submit calm

Without it, what would stop us from lying on the sofa all day, watching *This Morning*, reading *OK!*, shifting only when the house is repossessed? I, for one, wouldn't do a stroke of work if it weren't for anxiety. He says I would. "Most people's approach is the adrenalin approach. Through fear, panic, deadlines, they force their minds into a creative state. This will work for a while, but not for ever. You burn out, or need increasingly strong stimulants to keep going." No, being calm does not mean being catatonic. "The calm I'm talking about is the inner quiet you find in, for example, great martial artists. They have huge power and energy, but it comes from a very calm state. You can also be very creative from a calm state. Even more creative, actually."

OK, let's take Van Gogh, for the sake

Squeaky clean, yes, but completely unable to blow their noses



DINAH
HALL

GOOD NEWS for grubby families. Clean children are more likely to develop asthma, according to researchers at the Institute of Child Health at Bristol University, who believe that those with less scrupulous hygiene practices develop stronger immune systems. (I don't know why they waste all this money on research when they could have my mother's home-grown wisdom for nothing. "You've got to eat a peck of dirt before you die" is a favourite saying of hers every time a fly drops off the fly paper into the mashed potato, or we object to consuming resident wildlife along with the broccoli.) Our allergy-free status which has until now been a source of maternal pride to me (all that obsessive breast feeding paid off) now appears to flag us up as a less than squeaky clean family. In fact all the children have a nightly bath – but their definition of bath may vary from yours and mine. The 11-year-old jumps in, smiles at the face cloth and jumps out again, while the 13-year-old spends at least an hour in the bathroom. If he ever introduced himself to the soap he would be the cleanest teenager in Britain but as

it is, from what I can make out, he lies there reading a book and boiling away my future grandchildren. But the morning routine is where we slip up. The Montessorian school of child development believes in something called "windows of opportunity" – that there is an optimum time for a child to learn to do something, and if you're not careful you miss it and the window is closed. I can only think that I was so busy perfecting the children's psychological development that I missed the washing-your-face-in-the-morning window. We also missed the learning-

to-blow-your-nose window. Strange but true. None of my children can blow their noses. At times of deepest maternal insecurity, this is the one that keeps me awake at night – in years to come Oliver Sacks will probably write a study of them: *The Children Who Couldn't Blow Their Noses*.

YOU WOULD THINK the children would be pleased to be allergen-free. Not a bit of it. They're all desperate to be allergic to something – I think they see it as part of the package of modern childhood: trainers, Playstation and inhaler. And as I've given

in on the first two, they think it can't be long before I break on the third. I had hoped to appeal to their Newsround-formed consciences on the trainers issue, citing Third World exploitation and immoral profits but I had not reckoned on the power of Nike. A shopping expedition with the 13-year-old is painful at the best of times – it's like having a stalker: he trails three yards behind to avoid the horrible possibility of anyone making a connection between the two of us. When trainers are involved I have learnt to vacate my body and hover above on another

spiritual plane, leaving boy and cheque book to argue it out. This time the 11-year-old insisted on coming along with his own agenda. He wanted to make sure his older brother got ones that weren't "sad" and would therefore reflect badly on him, but on the other hand were not so cool that they were better than his. Bless.

A FRIEND OF MINE learnt a valuable lesson this week. We were having lunch when her oldest son, who was ill, came downstairs looking pale and miserable. A few words of sympathy from his moth-

er and his two-year-old sister started screaming and crying. "What's the matter with her? Is she going to be sick?" panicked Sally. "I think you'll find," I said in my best experienced-mother-of-four, smug-psychiatrist tones, "that Daisy is just voicing her displeasure at finding Toby the centre of attention." "Oh, do you think so?" breathed Sally in pathetically grateful mother-of-three tones, just as Daisy threw up the entire contents of her stomach into her mother's lap. And the moral is – never take advice from a woman whose children can't blow their noses.

THE INDEPENDENT

EDITOR: ROSIE BOYCOTT; DEPUTY EDITOR: CHRIS BLACKHURST
ADDRESS: 1 CANADA SQUARE, CANARY WHARF, LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE: 0171 293 2000 OR 0171 345 2000
FAX: 0171 293 2435 OR 0171 345 2435
THE INDEPENDENT ON THE INTERNET: WWW.INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Ministers lost in the welfare forest

The Prime Minister was without doubt one of those boys who was up all night sweating before the exams. He is a deadline-driven politician who leaves things to the last minute. Welfare reform is the most glaring example yet of his failure to think difficult issues through.

Before the election he made a number of grand and not necessarily compatible statements. One of the more important was (in this newspaper): "I see huge inequalities in wealth and opportunity and believe they should be corrected." Others were made less publicly, to the effect that lone mothers were feckless and the young unemployed should be forced to get off their backsides. Closer to the election Tony Blair delivered not policies but streamlined slogans: hand-ups not hand-outs; work as the best way out of poverty; a national childcare strategy. This broad-brush approach was good. It was quite right to drop the old left-wing assumption that tax-and-spend was the answer to all social ills.

But there was no detail. And since the election, there have so far been only gestures. The new prime minister made his first speech on a deprived housing estate in south London and talked of the multiple causes of "social exclusion". The Labour Party's most radical thinker in this area, Frank Field, was given a big ministerial post. Now, here was a man with a blueprint. But, though Blair liked Mr Field's rhetorical lines about family and duty, the detailed scheme was a Heath Robinson contraption that would never have worked.

So who did he appoint to cut this Gordian knot? Harriet Harman, an arch-moderniser who had lost the confidence of the Labour Party while failing to convince the wider public that she could do her sums.

After the public relations disaster of the vote to enact (next month) the Conservative cut in benefits for new lone parents, Mr Blair took to the country to "sell" his welfare reforms. But what are they? All he has sold so far is the proposition that the present system is not working and that we should not be afraid to change it. Meanwhile, Ms Harman was asking her friends to rally round and save her job.

Little wonder, then, that the Government approaches the Budget in two weeks' time with its welfare policy in tatters. Last week we thought - for a moment - that Mr Blair had a plan after all; that the lone parent benefit fiasco had been a bad dream; that it was all going to be put right in the Budget and all poor parents - single, double, in work or out - would be better off. It did not take long to realise that this was a desperate bid by Ms Harman to spin a series of highly technical Budget options into a tapestry depicting her higher virtues. We can hardly blame the Social Security Secretary for resorting to the women's network in the face of such catfiness from the old boys, but it would have helped if sums involved in the great scheme for giving back with the other hand had been done correctly.

It turns out that, while lone parents in work will benefit - as had already been leaked on behalf of the Chancellor himself - from the new Working Families Tax Credit, new lone parents who choose to look after children (such as under-fives) at home will still be worse off from next month. Meanwhile, ambitious plans to give tax relief worth up to three-quarters of the cost of child care are highly tentative, and would not begin until next April at the earliest.

But this is only one part of the welfare reform forest where ministers cannot see the wood for the trees. The Government has a good story to tell on its ambitious plan to get the long-term unemployed off benefits and into work or training. It failed utterly to sell the imposition of university tuition fees as a measure of social justice to reverse the subsidy to the middle classes. And, as we report today, it will put up NHS prescription charges to £5.80, further undermining the principle of universal free health care for trivial revenue gain.

It is a miserable mess, although not ill-intentioned, and some progress towards a fairer society might be made by the time of the next election. But a lot of time has already been wasted, a lot of people have been needlessly offended (the disabled, pensioners and students) and one unkind cut has been endorsed. Ms Harman should go, but Mr Blair should take the blame.

A kiss is just a kiss...



He smoked but he didn't inhale. Now it seems the President and Monica Lewinsky kissed but didn't have an "improper relationship". Although the White House denies it. The same White House whose spokesman said there was "nothing innocent or simple" about Bill Clinton's relationship with Monica. That spokesman, Mike McCurry, then said he must have been "out of his mind" and that he was "in the doghouse" as a result of what seemed like a welcome outbreak of straight speaking. But neither statement, it has been noticed, amounted to a denial.

It cannot be long now before the issue of half-truths and leaks is stripped away and something resembling the truth is told. The American press have been forced on to the defensive by an aggressive campaign by the White House, but not a single thing reported so far has been shown to be untrue.

Maybe it should not matter what the President gets up to in Oval Office alcoves, but it has become part of a pattern of slipperiness from which Mr Clinton nearly escaped when he left the Arkansas governor's mansion, but against which he will now inevitably be judged.

He smoked but didn't inhale. They had a "physical relationship" but it wasn't sexual. He spoke but we couldn't hear. He is in office, but not in power.



MILES KINGSTON

IT HAS BEEN a very tense weekend for me. I haven't mentioned this before, but I have spent a lot of time recently working with John Major on his forthcoming autobiography (I do the jokes, he does the owning up and apologising) and so when this HarperCollins fuss broke, I naturally wondered if my cushy little number had come to an end.

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"Well," said the ex-premier, "thanks for the last lot of jokes, though I'm afraid I

didn't quite understand that one about Norman Lamont and the one-legged nun. Could you explain it again?"

"I'm not really talking about the writing of our book, sir. I was thinking about this fuss about Chris Patten and Rupert Murdoch."

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"That's what I'm talking about."

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"With respect, sir," I said, "you're behaving as if you were still in charge. Nobody is asking you to resign as an admission of failure. But there are other kinds of resignation besides resignation at the top. There might be pressure on you to resign in protest against what the man in charge is doing. Namely, Mr Rupert Murdoch. Or, as he is known inside the Vatican, Sir Rupert Murdoch."

There was a silence at this. I could have bit my lip. I should know better by now than to try jokes on Mr Major.

"I'll ring you back on this one," he said, and rang off.

When he does come back to me, I'll try testing his moral stance by asking him if he intends to resign from the MCC over their refusal to admit women, which he has publicly condemned. I'll let you know which way he jumps.



Student power: undergraduates from Emmanuel College taking part in the annual Cambridge Rag Week. Last year more than £73,000 was raised for good causes
Photograph: Brian Harris. A 9x12 print of this photograph can be ordered on 0171 293 2534

PICTURE OF THE DAY

Murdoch's censors

THE SHAMEFUL treatment of Chris Patten's book, and of his editor, Stuart Proffitt, reveals much of how Rupert Murdoch's censorship works. However, that censorship's insidious nature has deep roots.

Two years ago, I completed my autobiography and sent it to my editor at HarperCollins, then my publisher. I had every reason to expect its speedy acceptance and publication. My friendly editor, Malcolm Edwards, had written to me on holiday in Cyprus commenting on an earlier draft, saying, "You have 85-90 per cent of a tremendous book."

At that time, HarperCollins was undergoing one of its purges. The purge, as far as an outsider can determine, left Malcolm Edwards in charge of fiction lists and Stuart Proffitt of non-fiction. An unprecedented four months' silence followed Malcolm's receipt of my manuscript. He wrote finally, a civil and rather despairing letter, saying that the sales department had decided that my book would sell only two thousand copies.

This is a self-fulfilling prophecy. When editors are ruled by the sales force and those above them, the atmosphere is poisonous for both authors and editors. I left HarperCollins in March last year. Shortly afterwards, Malcolm also left. Now Stuart has also gone. When such authors as Doris Lessing and Fay Weldon also leave, the sales force will have the place to themselves.

My autobiography will appear from Little Brown this autumn. BRIAN WALDRIDGE
Oxford

IT APPEARS to be suggested by the media that the underlying reason why Chris Patten has withdrawn his book from HarperCollins is that the owner, Rupert Murdoch, did not wish to publish a book which might upset the Chinese government. This is apparently because Mr Murdoch has business interests in China.

This suggestion seems to me to be relevant to the question which was raised recently about the alleged predatory pricing of *The Times* newspaper. Officials of *The Times* have

been heard to say that the low price is possible because of the enhanced advertising revenue which results from the increase in sales. However, experience has shown that low pricing can be the result of an organisation employing a cross-subsidy from some other activity.

It is here that the need for a Monopolies Commission inquiry becomes manifest. Is the low price in truth justified by enhanced advertising revenues? Or is it achieved by cross-subsidy from other activities, such as those in China, or those of Mr Murdoch's TV empire generally? And is it because of the possible effect on a cross-subsidy from activities in China, that what happened in respect of HarperCollins took place?

Because of the importance of a free press the whole matter of the pricing and conduct of the Murdoch empire ought to be examined by the Monopolies Commission. STEPHEN GRATWICK QC
Sevenoaks, Kent

WOULD YOU please stop giving details of Rupert Murdoch's empire? Not only can I not bring myself to buy *The Sun* or *The Times*, or to subscribe to Sky TV, but now I cannot consider buying any HarperCollins books. My freedom of choice is being restricted. JOHN PALMER
Waterlooville, Hampshire

Countryside March

THE Countryside March has been funded by contributions from the thousands of people taking part and by the Countryside Alliance ("US shooting lobby funds countryside march", 26 February). The Countryside Alliance is funded by its members' annual subscriptions, by contributions from the hunting community via the Campaign for Hunting, and by donations and

fundraising events. One of these events was the recent auction at Sotheby's in New York.

While it is true that the American Masters of Foxhounds Association gave a generous donation to the Campaign for Hunting, as a gesture of solidarity, for which we are most grateful, there is no record of any contribution from the "US shooting lobby".

Similarly there is no truth whatsoever in the suggestion that the march has been "hijacked" by anyone, for political or any other reasons. The Countryside Alliance is not linked to any political party it is a moot point whether the country community is more distrustful of the present government than it was of the last.

What is important is that the most law-abiding section of our community is concerned, frightened, and getting very angry, and it should be clearly understood that the one issue that focuses this anger is the threat to hunting.

Lord MANCROFT
Deputy Chairman
Countryside Alliance
London SE11

I KEEP two dogs, a collie and a lurcher. The collie is highly intelligent, contemplative and responsive. It eats meat but is so refined that it is incapable of killing. The lurcher is a simpler beast, a tad more primitive, but a superb hunter that could easily survive without me.

Today in our society most of us are collies. We eat meat but are emotionally incapable of killing. Instead we employ a minority of lurchers to breed, grow, kill and butcher our meat for us. Is it right that we should now seek to impose our collie values on these lurchers, whilst at the same time expecting them to continue to fill our plates?

I, a collie, love and admire my lurcher friends and feel shame that

although I enjoy roast chicken I cannot bring myself to wring its neck. GEOFF STOVOLD
Tunbridge Wells, Kent

LIFE would be much easier if the protagonists in the fox-hunting debate were more honest about their motives. Then the pro-hunt lobby would stop talking about rural employment and conservation and would admit that they like killing foxes because it's good fun; and the anti-hunt lobby would admit they hate fox-hunting because foxes are nice furry creatures similar to teddy bears or Wombles.

We could then get our genetic engineers to cross a slug with a greyhound and produce a slimy thing that ran very fast and would be fun to hunt, and nobody would care if it got killed.

PETE BARRETT
Colchester, Essex

Titanic errors

I WAS amazed that Alan Sanderson should seek to defend the reputation of his grandfather, Bruce Ismay (letter, 26 February).

As chairman of White Star Line, he must have approved of the decision to equip the *Titanic* with fewer lifeboat places than the total number of passengers and crew, contrary to the ship designer's original plan. This was legal at the time, but surely morally indefensible.

As for being "ordered into the last boat", it is on record that other first-class passengers, among them Mr and Mrs Strauss, owners of Macy's of New York, chose not to take up places in the lifeboats.

We cannot all rise to such nobility, but when we fail, a dignified silence in the face of adverse comment is surely the proper response.

DORENE BORRIE
(Lady Borrie)
Abbots Morton, Worcestershire

Save the arts

IT IS excellent to see *The Independent* instigating a campaign for the arts, so urgently needed at the moment.

There is one important proviso however: funds gathered either from sponsorship or through tax deduction tend to benefit the established and the conservative. It is essential, even if your initiative is successful, that pressure for strong public subsidy continues, otherwise the original and adventurous will suffer. With remarkable exceptions, the circumstances regarding contemporary music in the USA - and the impoverished position of the National Endowment for the Arts there - should be a warning against placing too much faith in private donations as the source of long-term creative development.

GEORGE BENJAMIN
Artistic consultant, *Sounding the Century*
BBC
London W1

Train or car

NICK BROWN, managing director of Midland Mainline, thinks it is not unreasonable to charge more for people who wish for spontaneity or flexibility in rail travel (letter, 27 February). At a time when it is generally accepted that we need to curb car use, I feel he is missing the point. The great virtue of the car is that it does allow for a large degree of flexibility. By hiking up the price of turn-up-and-go tickets, Midland Mainline is not likely to persuade the average motorist to give up their car in favour of rail travel.

DANIEL JOHNSON
London W1

Benny's one-liner

MY RECOLLECTION of Jack Benny's one-liner differs from Dudley Doust's (letter, 27 February). Prompted by the mugger's repeated threat, "Your money or your life", Benny lazily replies, "Okay, okay - I'm thinking about it."

MICHAEL SHACKEL
Sanderstead, Surrey

Major and Murdoch - Will he pull the book? Will he see the story? Will he get the joke?



MILES KINGSTON

IT HAS BEEN a very tense weekend for me. I haven't mentioned this before, but I have spent a lot of time recently working with John Major on his forthcoming autobiography (I do the jokes, he does the owning up and apologising) and so when this HarperCollins fuss broke, I naturally wondered if my cushy little number had come to an end.

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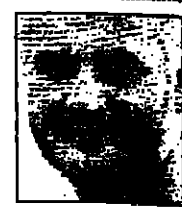
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Now that the windows are all smashed, what happens next?



**PAUL
VALLELY
CUNNING
BANKERS**

It is axiomatic at international gatherings that the more diverse the group, the more bland the statement at the end of the meeting. Which may explain why a group of 30 of the world's leading religious figures conjured a communiqué at Lambeth Palace the other day which was positively soporific. After all, it did have to encompass the worldview of the Bahai, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Taoist faiths, not to mention one of the most unyielding of religious dogmas, that of the free-market economists of the World Bank.

The meeting was hosted jointly by Dr George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and James Wolfensohn, the President of the World Bank. Its subject was the relationship between religion and development. Its delegates included a variety of luminaries from the Crown Prince of Jordan to the head of the Vatican's Justice and Peace pontifical commission and a Lutheran bishop who is a member of the Masai tribe. You might be forgiven for wondering if it was all a massive PR job. Certainly one of those present in the meeting voiced such a concern. Wasn't it all window-dressing? asked the Hindu, Dr Vandana Shiva.

"You've smashed all our windows," was the devastating reply from Wolfensohn who went on to acknowledge that the Banks' Structural Adjustment Programmes had not always been sufficiently conscious of the need to protect the Third World's poorest people. The rest of us knew this. Too often, also, its medium-term policies were in conflict with the short-term exigencies of the approach of the International Monetary Fund. Too often, in addition, its grandiose schemes for dams and power stations further enriched the wealthy caste in poor countries, or increased trade or GDP, but did nothing to help the really poor.

Now here it was repenting, in private, before the world's religions. What was going on? "We used to arrive and look at a country purely economically," said one Bank official privately. "We ignored the cultural capital of the society: how the family works, how apprenticeships work, what is the role of the mosque. Our attitude to cultural traditions was only that these were museum fodder for tourism. We failed to understand the role these play in making a society work. In the absence of the social and the cultural we were promoting a lobotomised development."

There was, admittedly, something venal about the conversion. "Look around," said

the official. "Everyone in this room can mobilise millions of people." The faiths had three strengths denied to the powerful self-consciously secular Bank. "They have the moral authority to stand in the public square and denounce corruption. They have detailed knowledge of what goes on at the grass roots. And they have effective organisations and delivery systems." As if to prove the point at that moment a diminutive figure in bright orange robes padded by. "Have you seen the Aga Khan?" he asked. He was Swami Vibudhesha Teertha, one of India's most senior Hindu monks. His fiat determines the economic, transport and education policies in 1,250 villages and towns and hundreds of primary and secondary schools.

Even so there are many back at the World Bank who regard Wolfensohn's latest idea as "flakey". They took a similarly dim view of his insistence, after he took over in 1995, that the top 400 of its 10,000 employees each had to go and live in a Third World slum for one week. That was why the concluding statement was so bland. "We wanted nothing too emotional or laden with the vocabulary of faith which those back in Washington could dismiss," said one of the drafters.

The plan now is to set up a number of joint Bank-Faith action groups alongside exemplary practical projects. The Bank wants to finance the training of Buddhist monks in reconciliation skills in Cambodia. In Anandpur, where the Sikh brotherhood



A gap to be bridged: Wolfensohn (left) and Carey
Photograph: PA

was founded in 1699, a project is to be encouraged to control the growth of the town in a way which embodies Sikh values, using solar power and recycled waste as energy sources, developing alternative transport mechanisms and setting up 5,000 light industrial units which only produce environmentally-sustainable goods.

"This is a post-Enlightenment world, not a post-religious one," said one senior Bank official. "As governments have lost their legitimacy so people have turned to faith and the social contract has been renegotiated. It is the religions which stand between the state and the market – both of which people don't fully trust – as communities which are trusted, which link the macro and the micro, and which protect the interests of the poor. Give us a year and we'll show you something new." The risk, of course, is that the religions may find themselves being used merely to add respectability to an unpopular secular agenda. But, just perhaps, something worthwhile might emerge. It is a risk worth taking.

Sadly for Mr Blair the copyright he craves has already been claimed



**TOM
SUTCLIFFE
AN ALIBI FOR
PLEASURE**

In 1824 construction began on a pleasure dome on a site between Albany Street and Cambridge Terrace, on the fringes of Regent's Park. It was eventually to be called the Colosseum and it was conceived on a suitably grand scale. Designed by a young architect called Decimus Burton, its central feature was a rotunda with a dome 30 feet wider than St Paul's and 112 feet high at its apex.

There was no controversy about what it would contain. It had been specifically constructed to house what was then the largest panorama ever painted – a 134 foot diameter depiction of the view from the very pinnacle of St Paul's (the painter, a topographical artist called Thomas Hornor, had actually constructed a but above the cross and ball of Wren's cathedral, mounted on precarious looking scaffolding). No less than 46,000 square feet of canvas were to be covered with a meticulous representation of every street, facade and rooftop visible from that vantage point.

By contrast with the Millennium Dome, of course, the Colosseum was a relatively modest enterprise – its expanses of daubed canvas a mere pocket-handkerchief alongside the prairie of Teflon-coated fabric which will soon be hoisted into position south of the Thames. But if the architectural dimensions (not to mention the building costs) show evidence of inflationary pressure there is still a kind of kinship between Hornor's enterprise and Mr Mandelson's great adventure.

When the contents of the Millennium Dome were unveiled last week, to the accompaniment of a bracing sermon from the Prime Minister on the virtues of positive thinking and the vice of cynicism, it was striking to see how traditional they were. The carapace of the exhibits might look futuristic and the inner-workings might be technologically advanced but the essential spirit – that of improving spectacle – strikes a much more venerable note. Its showmanship is essentially Victorian and almost every exhibit strikes some kind of echo with the didactic attractions of Victorian London.

Take Wyld's Great Globe, for example, a commercial spectacle constructed where Leicester Square is now situated. This huge hollow sphere carried on its inside surface a relief map



Back to the future: moderniser or Victorian?
Photomontage: Mark Hayman

of the world (constructed from 6,000 plaster casts – the Victorians were as fond of breathtaking statistics as we are today). Spectators entered through Antarctica and could view the surface of the world – including the satisfactory evidence of expanding British dominion – from a series of viewing platforms. The Great Globe was so unimpeachable a

sentation of knowledge as a grand day out with the added bonus of self-improvement. The Victorians were peerless at the creation of such diversions, in particular at exploiting the way in which information could provide an alibi for pleasure.

This was a period, too, when a place of public resort could be called the Poly-

Labour is as Victorian a government as we have had for years in its moral sternness and occasional fits of priggishness but they have a problem in galvanising historical glory

recreation that even that most extreme fundamentalist Philip Gosse took his son Edmund to see it, just as, one imagines, dutiful parents will guide their children through the carefully de-sexed colossus that will house the Dome's Body Zone.

Browse through Richard Altick's wonderful account of Victorian entertainment. *The Shows of London*, and you are repeatedly struck by the same blend of education and recreation that characterises the Dome exhibits, its pre-

technic Institutes (their big draw being a diving bell in which intrepid visitors could undertake a total immersion experience) and when the oxyhydrogen microscope – a device which could project magnified slides – was as indispensable an attraction as a virtual reality headset. Sometimes the desire to feed the public's appetite for edifying novelty took rather peculiar turns – as with Richardson's Rock Harmonicon, an instrument modelled on the xylophone

and constructed (over a period of 13 years) by a Cumberland mason, who carved each stone key until it gave the right tonal response to being whacked with a mallet. The repertoire included extracts from Beethoven, Rossini and Haydn and the instrument was played by Richardson's sons, who billed themselves as "the Original Rock Band". Had they been around today they would almost certainly have been invited to a Number Ten drinks party.

And if the Dome is essentially Victorian in its attitudes – a cathedral to technological optimism and social improvement – it is surely consistent with the overall moral tone of the current government. Listen to Tony Blair in almost any speech and you can hear the edifying prose of Samuel Smiles, the very first guru of self-help. "It is the men that advance in the highest and best directions, who are the true beacons of human progress," wrote Smiles in an essay on *Character*. "They are as lights set upon a hill, illumining the moral atmosphere around them; and the light of their spirit continues to shine upon all succeeding generations."

Change a few words here and there and you would have a Blair speech about Britain's role in the world, gleaming with inspirational lighting effects. Even the rather preachy invitations to look upon the future with muscular confidence have their counterparts in Smiles' positivism: "The habit of viewing things cheerfully, and of thinking about life hopefully, may be made to grow up in us like any other habit." Smiles wrote in his best-seller *Self-Help*. "It was not an exaggerated estimate of Dr Johnson to say, that the habit of looking at the best side of any event is worth more than a thousand pounds a year." Hoping to persuade journalists to look at the best side of the Millennium event, Blair struck a very similar note of bootstrap philosophy.

In my view this isn't necessarily a bad thing – you have to go a long way to find a society as dedicated to the idea of steady amelioration as the Victorians, or a time in which there was such optimism about the susceptibility of human problems to the energy of individual citizens. Some of it was misguided, some of it mendacious, but we've coasted on their legacy through a large part of the current century – using but not repairing their drains, allowing their rail networks to die back from a branching profusion, impoverishing their galleries and museums.

If we are to succeed in the next millennium there are far worse models we might look to. When the 1951 Festival of Britain was in full swing much was made of the historical coincidence of another Elizabethan age. Past historical glories were enlisted as a galvanising example for future efforts. The only problem for the Labour party – as Victorian a government as we have had for years in its moral sternness and occasional fits of priggishness – is that they can't easily do the same thing. Someone else beat them for the copyright on Victorian values.

Why William was a Good Thing... unlike Bad King John



**GLEND
COOPER**

Cleanliness, the scientists now say, can be rather unhealthy. You have been warned

It is news that will cheer the heart of every tousled-haired, dirty finger-nailed, black-kneed kid around. William Brown has finally won. Dirt is good for you. A survey by the Institute of Child Health in Bristol University has found that grubby children may be their mothers' despair but they are in fact healthier.

Scientists have discovered that children who bathe daily (and wash their hands more than five times a day) are 25 per cent more likely to have asthma than their dirtier friends. And those who bathe least are the healthiest of the lot. The explanation that the ICH have come up with for this is that washing at an early age may have a direct effect on the

child's immune system, leaving them more vulnerable and sensitive to allergens.

Murrah says a zillion adolescents who spend hours avoiding the bathroom – until of course they discover girls and have to be prised out of there. But to be honest I don't think it needed a survey of 14,000 children in the Bristol area to prove clean children pick things up. It's a problem all too many mothers will be familiar with – the Nitty Nitty Syndrome. Send your children to school with shining clean hair and you can guarantee they'll come back with head lice. Meanwhile the disgusting oiks down the road are still nit-free.

But history and literature could have taught us the danger

of obsessive washing. The Roman empire did absolutely fine, conquering most of Europe and seemingly invincible until they started concentrating on Roman baths, and then suddenly it was Nero fiddling while Rome burned and making his horse a senior member of government. The other famous bather of the ancient world is of course Cleopatra, who it was said liked bathing in asses' milk for her complexion. The practice may have made her one of the most famous lovers in history but it clearly lost her the kingdom.

Cleanliness is not necessarily next to godliness. As *1066 And All That* puts it, one of the cleanest kings of England was Bad King John who "demonstrated his utter incompetence

by losing his Crown and all his clothes in the Wash". If he'd just fished them out of the linen basket to see if they'd do another day, the whole tragedy might have been averted. The book also darkly hints that the Order of the Bath was seen as an extreme form of torture in the Middle Ages.

Cleanliness has of course not had the best press when it comes to psychological matters. Think for example of Lady Macbeth. It's popularly been assumed that her sleepwalking and obsessive handwashing springs from guilt over Duncan's murder. Sadly it's more likely the spur was that Lady Macduff might be passing rumours that the new queen has dirty fingernails, which is why

she wails that "all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand". (It's now also believed that Ophelia didn't commit suicide but lost her balance after over-vigorous application of a loofah during some extra-mural bathing).

No, a little bit of dirt did no one any harm, as Just William can testify. While his arch enemies the Hubert Langleites were languishing on their beds sick with only an improving history book to keep them company, William and the Outlaws were out saving the day, getting five shilling rewards and munching through endless slices of layer cakes. A smattering of grubbiness is a small price to pay for what sounds like a vastly more exciting life.

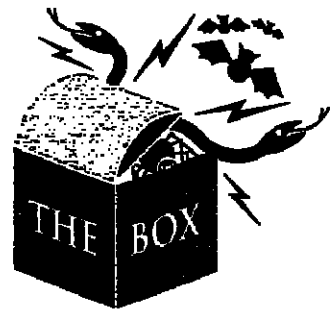
In the latest episode of the Harry Evans v Toby Young feud, Evans, the husband of Tina Brown and editorial director of the *NY Daily News*, has told another New York paper, "I worry that if I stop screwing up, he [Young] won't have a livelihood. I might have to walk naked down Fifth Avenue so he has something to write about."

Perhaps Evans won't have to disrobe and go for an urban ramble quite yet. One of his employees at the *Daily News* has reported that Evans is having difficulty finding his way around his new offices. Every time he goes to the lavatory, he has to ask for directions back to his desk. And there is another report indicating that hattie fatigue may already be taking its toll on the valiant former *Sunday Times* editor. Not long ago the telephone rang in the home of a London friend of his. When she picked up

the receiver, she was stunned to hear Harry say, "Hello, could I speak to Harry Evans please."

Word circulating around the Law Society is that the Lord Chancellor is seeking to move the start of the legal year from October 1st. The ostensible reason? The fancy dress parade that accompanies this annual judicial milestone will clash with this year's Labour Conference. However, so the rumour goes, there is some resistance to the postponement from both the legal profession and the Labour Party. Neither would be exactly heartbroken if Lord Irvine was occupied elsewhere.

Fundamentalist Christians in the US have proclaimed a new "Eleventh Commandment" for the Clinton White House. "Thy shalt not put thy rod in thine staff."



British documentary filmmaker Nick Broomfield's investigative epic about the suicide of Kurt Cobain, *Kurt and Courtney*, finally got its premiere screening in San Francisco on Friday evening. This followed Courtney Love's success in having the film yanked out of the Sundance Festival in January. "She sent a last minute threatening letter to the Roxy

Cinema on Friday," reports Broomfield, "but they went ahead and showed it anyway. The premiere was like a zoo. It was great."

Among those in the audience were Sean Penn, his wife Robin Wright, Divine Brown (Hugh Grant's brief acquaintance) and a wild assortment of San Francisco Mission District denizens. Miss Love, who is Cobain's widow and a former member of his grunge group Nirvana, has gone on to achieve a high profile as a screen actress.

"As far as I know, Courtney hasn't seen the film. It looks at all the conspiracy theories and concludes that none of them are true," says Broomfield. The BBC helped finance the project and owns the UK distribution rights. Britain's Generation X-ers just can't wait.

Since *The Angel of the North*, the colossal sculpture by Anthony Gormley, was erected outside Gateshead two weeks ago, local residents have been trying to adapt to this massive arrival on the town's windswept horizon.

Now they've come up with a nickname that should put the ambitious artwork into proper perspective. They're calling it (see picture) *"The Gateshead Flasher"*.



Angel of the North: sexually revealing?

Pandora

INDEPENDENT
ON SCREEN

CVCP
The Council of
Vocational Colleges
Higher
Education
Conferences

Lifelong Learning

The Role for Universities

Thursday 5 March 1998 - Central London

The Government is due to publish a series of White Papers on Lifelong Learning in early 1998, from the DfEE, Scottish and Welsh Offices. This one day CVCP conference will explore the role for universities in developing and implementing the Government's proposals. Universities already play a significant role in lifelong learning, providing courses at all levels – HND, undergraduates, PhD and CPD. How will the developments announced in the White Papers affect this role in particular what changes will be needed in universities' management, access, curriculum and funding? How can higher education generally develop its interface and partnership with further education to deliver the flexible learning opportunities that lifelong learning demands?

The conference is for senior managers in higher and further education, academics, careers advisers and training and personnel officers in business and funding organisations.

Speakers include:

- Baroness Blackstone, Minister for Education and Employment
- Diana Warwick, Chief Executive, Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals
- Professor Bob Fryer, Principal, Northern College (Lifelong Learning Advisory Group)
- Dr Geraldine Kenney-Wallace, MD and VC, British Aerospace Virtual University

Delegate Fees

Full Rate Commercial, Central Government £240+VAT (£42.00) Total £282.00
Reduced Rate Universities, Local Authorities £85+VAT (£15.30) Total £100.30
Supported Rate Voluntary Organisations, Charities £20+VAT (£3.75) Total £23.75

For further information and booking forms please contact:

Neil Stewart Associates

41 Dartmouth Street London SW1H 9BL tel 0171-222 0280 fax 0171-222 0278

Professor Mancur Olson

He was a wonderfully sympathetic person, remarkable for his equable temperament

n 1959. This powerful and enjoyable score had the misfortune – with the later Second – to be seen as a “Cheltenham Symphony” at the time when, as Bush saw it, William Glock engineered a shift in taste at the BBC.

A total composer who wrote tunes had a hard critical time of it in the 1960s. This, temporarily at least, made it an unacceptable genre. The Second Symphony waited 35 years for a second and adequate performance, only ending when it was recorded for Lyrita in 1994.

As a post-Waltonian symphonist Bush was remarkably persuasive, the slow movement of

Geoffrey Bush, composer and teacher: born London 23 March 1920; married 1950 Julie McKenna (two sons); died London 24 February 1998.

During his childhood, the Dublin-born entertainer - brought up as a devout Catholic - had thoughts about joining the priesthood himself. After giving up such ideas, he became a teacher of English but started writing scripts for Irish radio and television before becoming a stand-up comic. He even topped the Irish record charts with a single entitled

Irish, the series was critically acclaimed, too, winning the Best New Comedy prize at the 1995 British Comedy Awards and subsequently taking the honour as Best Situation Comedy for

Anthony Hayward
*Dermot Morgan, actor: born Dublin
 3 March 1952; married (three
 sons); died Isleworth, Middlesex 1
 March 1998.*



Olson: comically humble

Iain McLean
Maurice Lloyd Olson, economist: born Grand Forks, North Dakota 22 January 1932; Lecturer, Princeton University 1960-61, Assistant Professor 1963-67; Deputy Assistant Secretary, US State Department of Health, Education and Welfare 1967-69; staff, University of Maryland 1969-98, Professor 1970-98, Distinguished Professor of Economics 1979-98; married 1959 Alison Gilbert (two sons, one daughter); died College Park, Maryland 19 February 1998.



Dermot Morgan

During his childhood, the Dublin-born entertainer - brought up as a devout Catholic - had thoughts about joining the priesthood himself. After giving up such ideas, he became a teacher of English but started writing scripts for Irish radio and television before becoming a stand-up comic. He even topped the Irish record charts with a single entitled

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Anthony Hayward



Olson: comically humble



IN MEMORIAM

GAYHUR: Kundai, died 2 March 1958. Our beautiful courageous son whom we love and miss so much. God is keeping you safe till we meet again. Love Mummy and Baba.

Birthdays

Ms Pat Arrowsmith, peace campaigner, née Mrs Margaret Barberi, ballerina. 51: Mr Harry Blec, founder of the London Mozart Players. 52: Lady Myra Bland, pianist. 53: Mrs Mary Bland, pianist. 54: John Bland, 1st Baron Bland, Brigadier. 55: Sir Leonard Crossland, farmer and former chairman, Eaton Ltd. 56: Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Darlingford, former Director of the Naval Staff College. 57: Sir John Elton, former government minister. 68: Mr Jon Finch, actor. 58: Mr John Gardner, composer. 81: Mr Mikhail Gorbachev, former President of the Soviet Union. 67: Sir Donald Houston, actor. 69: Sir John Jones, C Parks Ltd. 69: Mr Ronald Groves, former chairman, Meyer International. 78: Lord Howie of Troon, engineer, publisher and journalist. 74: Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster. 75: Dame Naomi James, swimmer. 76: Sir John de la Rocha, former ambassador to Latvia. 55: Mrs Jennifer Jones, ac-

and the State: A Last Call

stare him and Rescue Service Headquarters, Storer, Staffordshire, to mark the 50th anniversary of the "heart-to-heart" fire and Rescue Service as President, the Prime's three sons, the Hon. James Hodge, Langton, Staffordshire; and two sons, Spode, St. John's, Storer, Storer and attends a lunch for local supporters of the Prime's Trust and Banquet in the Community. The Princess Royal, President, the Society of Children's Fund, attends the Reception and Banquet.

ness, 79; Mr Ro

65: bass, 58; Sir John Manduelli, composer, and former Principal, Royal Northern College of Music, 70; Mr Hugh Monro, Headmaster, Clifton College, 48; Mr Lembit Opik MP, 33; Lt.-Gen Sir Robert Richardson, 69; Mr John Tusa, managing director, Barbican Centre, 62; Mr John Peter Rhys Williams, rugby player and surgeon, 49; Mr Ian Woosnam, golfer, 40.

Anniversaries

Births: Sir Thomas Bodley, founder of the Bodleian Library, 1545. Deaths: John Wesley, founder of Methodism, 1791; David Herbert Lawrence, novelist, 1930. On this day: the French prototype Concorde made its first test flight, 1969; Rhodesia was proclaimed a republic, 1970. Today is the Feast Day of St Chad or Caedda, St Joavan of Britany and the Martyrs under the Lombards.

Changing of the Guard

the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment as well as the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11st; the Household Welsh Guards as well as the Queen's Guard, Buckingham Palace. I L. Kam, Royal provided by the

CASE SUMMARIES: 2 MARCH 1998

THE FOLLOWING notes of judgments were prepared by the reporters of the *All England Law Reports*.

Planning

The concerns of objecting local residents about the nature and character of potential residents of a proposed development were capable of amounting to material considerations for the purposes of s 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, because the concerns were essentially about anti-social behaviour, and any such behaviour would be attributable to the nature of the proposed use.

Barry Pinson, Paula Norman (Hansell

SELECTED BIBLE VERSES

Extradition
 R v Secretary of State for the Home Department, ex p Agha; QBD (Dw CJ) (Kennedy LJ, Maurice Kay J) 13 Feb 1998.
 Section 13(2) of the Extradition Act 1989 placed a burden on an applicant liable to be returned to a convention country to raise any issue he wished to have considered by the Secretary of State. Those representations having been made, the Secretary of State should respond, even if only briefly, before or at the time he makes the order pursuant to s 13(2), so that the applicant knows his

John Hardy (T)

WAT
Network Insurance Brokers Ltd v
Customs and Excise Commrs; QBD
[Moys J] 12 February 1998.
Contribution received for ar-
ranging fixed-price funerals for
the members of an affinity
group to be supplied by another
organisation did not fall with-
in the exemption for "making
of arrangements for or in con-
nection with the disposal of the
remains of the dead" within
Paragraph 9, Group 8, item 2 of the
Value Added Tax Act 1994. The

Robert Levy (S)

Capital Gains Tax

Woodward v Curtis (1981); CA (Millett J), Silverman LJ, Sir Brian Neill) 18 Feb 1988.

The general commissioners were entitled to conclude that occupation of a house for only one month while it was on the market did not constitute "residence" to qualify for an exemption from capital gains tax for private residences without s 222 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992.

See also Evans (Ed. Robinson & Co., 1992).

Capital Gains Tax

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Abstract

the taxpayer: Timothy Brennan (IR
olicitor) for the Crown.

Tax

estway (Holdings) Ltd v Luff (1987) 1 All ER 1001, 120 FTL 1001 (Q.B.). Buildings used as wholesale supermarkets selling goods to small retailers were not "industrial buildings" within the meaning of s 18(1) of the Capital Allowances Act 1990. The activities involved in packaging goods etc did not amount to subjecting the goods to any process within s 18(1)(e), nor were the goods kept for sale as soon as possible "stored" within s 18(1)(f).

David Cox (K. Aparna Nathan (Anthony Oberman & Co) for the taxpayer.
Timothy Brennan (IR Solicitor) for
the Crown.

صَبَّحْنَا مِنَ الْإِهِلِ

Small caps to steam ahead as blue chips slow

WEEK AHEAD



DEREK PAIN

AT LAST second and third liners have come to life. After trailing miserably behind their blue chip peers in the long bull run, they have picked up an increasingly powerful head of steam.

Although the mid cap index has hit 14 peaks this month it was not until the last two days of last week that it really started to challenge the gap which has opened up with the Footsie. The FTSE 250 index closed on Friday at 5,184.9 compared with the 4,866.5 it opened February. The mid cap performance has been mirrored by the small cap index which is also standing at a new high.

Mind you, second and third liners often perform well in the early months of a year. The array of New Year tips, inevitably concentrating on the smaller fry, is one influence; tip sheets with their tendency to highlight laggards also seem to have a greater impact be-

fore the year starts to get stale.

This time round there have also been the conversion windfalls; the soaring shares of the former building societies and Norwich Union must have encouraged many to cash in at least some of their chips and extend their portfolio.

NatWest Securities believes it is now possible to make a case for the mid and small caps. Says Bob Semple and David McBain:

"The valuation case has turned against the large cap stocks. Footsie has outperformed despite achieving slower earnings growth than either the small or mid caps sectors. Looking ahead the small and mid cap sectors are expected to record faster growth than the large caps but more importantly they now stand at a significant p/e discount."

Many fund managers regard straying outside blue

chips as hazardous. They are fearful of being caught by the lack of liquidity in many mid and particularly small cap shares.

Still, the undervaluations which exist in the mid and small caps have been underlined by the rush of takeover activity. The possibility of a bid sent Trust Motors soaring 55.5p to 195p on Friday.

It is difficult for the mid and small cap indices to outperform Footsie. High flying financials represent nearly 30 per cent of Footsie with more depressed engineers accounting for just 6 per cent. Financials make up 10 per cent of the undercard indices and engineers 25 per cent.

NatWest suggests investors trawling through the mid and small caps should look at financials such as Britannic, Northern Rock (due to go into Footsie) and United Assurance; on the property pitch it goes for MEPC and Slough

Estates. Others on the NatWest buy list include Barratt Developments, Northern Foods, Hazlewood Foods, BBA and Cobham.

This week's results are again dominated by blue chips. Financials are to the fore with Halifax producing its maiden year's figures. Underlying profits should emerge at £1.64bn against £1.43bn. The dividend should go up by around 18 per cent to 17.5p a

share and there is a strong possibility the sleeping giant of the banking world will indulge in a handsome cash hand-out, probably through a special dividend.

Other money groups reporting include Royal & Sun Alliance (£800m expected against £403m) and General Accident, already on the merger bandwagon following its deal with Commercial Union. About £500m, up from £421m, is likely.

BTR, the conglomerate which now wants to be regarded as a focused engineer, is, however, likely to attract more attention than any other blue chip on the reporting schedule.

It is due to produce year's figures on Thursday. They will not be good as befits a group which has made no fewer than five profit warnings in three years. Around £1.1bn is expected against £1.3bn. There is a danger the year's

dividend will be cut. BTR is being reshaped by Ian Strachan who has undertaken an extensive disposal programme. It is floating off its Australian interests and is looking for buyers for such diverse operations as glass and plastic bottles and building products.

BTR is one blue chip to miss the fun. The shares were above 400p in 1994; they closed last week at 161p after touching 152p, a 70 per cent under-performance.

Rolls-Royce, the aero engine group, should offer a sharp profits advance, from £220m to £274m; non Footsie Vickers, seeking to sell its Rolls-Royce car division, is on line to produce £74m (£83m).

Enterprise Oil will show the scars of the strong pound, lower production and higher costs and should announce net income of, say, £100m against £142.5m.

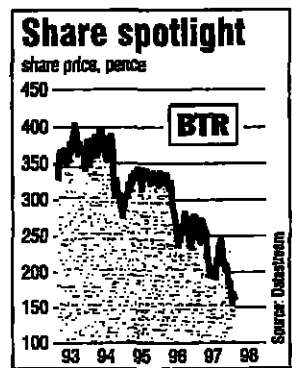
Other blue chips reporting

are Cadbury Schweppes (£570m (£592m)); Hays £90m (£71.7m); Ladbroke £222m (£163m) and Bilton £130m (£93m).

Zeneca, the drugs group, is another on the profits treadmill. The perennial takeover candidate should do its bid prospects no harm at all with profits emerging around £1.1bn against just over £1bn.

Some famous mid cap names feature in a busy week. Inchcape, the international trader, should offer £180m, up £15m, and Hanson, the building materials group, is seen as checking in with year's figures of £220m.

Hillsdown Holdings, the food group which may well signal the flotation of its house-building operation, should check in with profits of £156.5m, a 66m advance, and Cookson, the industrial materials group, could achieve £177m against £166m.



Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve month dividend gross divided as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items and including exceptional items. G/L: Prices are in sterling except where stated. 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BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR, JEREMY WARNER
NEWS DESK: 0171-293 2636 FAX: 0171-293 2098 E-MAIL: INDYBUSINESS@INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
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OFT grills banks on excluded customers

By Terry Macalister

BRITAIN's high street banks fear a government crackdown after an official watchdog launched an unprecedented probe into their treatment of poor customers.

The Office of Fair Trading is investigating possible discrimination against homeless people in a move seen as part of an assault on social exclusion by the Blair government.

A letter sent to Midland, Barclays and other major banks by the OFT and obtained by *The Independent*, asks: "Does your company explicitly or implicitly refuse applications for current bank accounts for members of any specific groups, eg those of no fixed abode?"

The letter, dated 28 January, requests information on how many current accounts have been refused, what percentage of business this amounts to and "What were the main reasons for refusal?"

The OFT gave a deadline of 18 February for the answers, but a stunned banking community admits many have not been able to comply with the short notice.

The OFT believes that 20 per cent of the population do

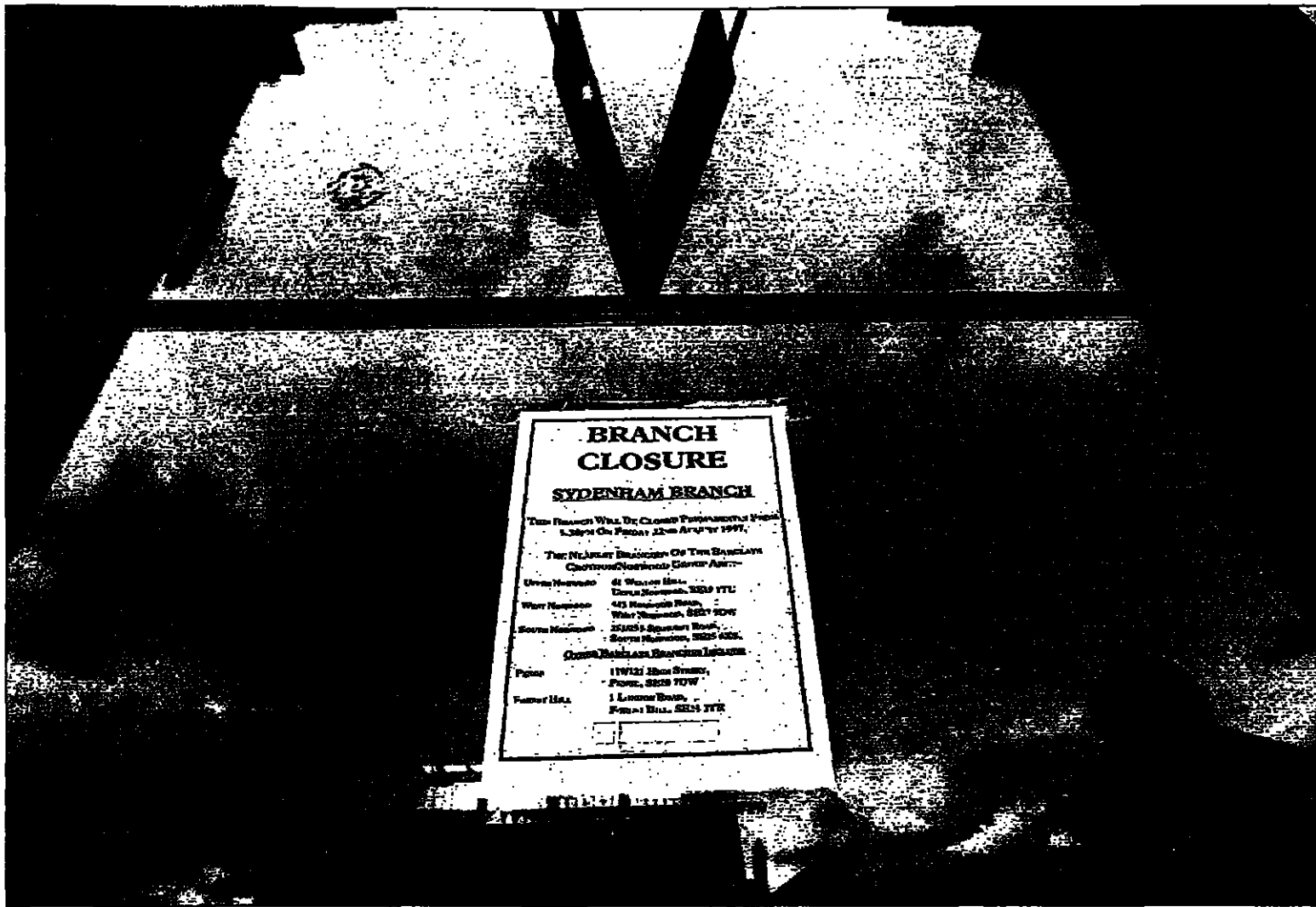
not have bank accounts and has questioned whether the needs of vulnerable consumers are being met. Official concern is magnified by confirmation that there were 10,334 bank branches at the last count in 1996 compared to 14,008 ten years earlier. Further closures have taken place in 1997.

Over the same ten years to 1996, companies such as Midland, which closed over 500 branches, saw its profits grow from £434million to £1.2billion. Rival Barclays closed over 800 branches yet easily doubled its pre-tax profits to £2.3bn in the same period.

The OFT is politically independent but the latest initiative by the OFT dovetails neatly with the activities of the cabinet's new social exclusion unit.

The British Banking Association was leading the fightback this weekend arguing the figure of 20 per cent of the population without bank accounts used by the OFT was not correct.

The assistant director Megan Salt, said: "I do not believe this figure. In fact we have statistics showing it's not correct." She pointed out that the question of whether or not homeless people were given bank accounts was not a simple one. Under money laundering



The OFT is investigating discrimination against homeless by banks who have raised profits by closing branches

Photograph: Andy Blackmore

Bass to expand All Bar One and O'Neills into Europe

By Andrew Yates

BASS, the leisure giant, is planning to take some of its most successful pub chains overseas. Sir Ian Prosser, the group's chairman, has identified All Bar One, the continental style bar, and O'Neills, the Irish pub, as concepts that would prove popular abroad. He is looking to roll out the group's pub business throughout Europe and America over the next few years.

The group hopes to cash in on the growing popularity of theme pubs in continental Europe. Bass also believes that the market for Irish houses has peaked in the UK. In recent years the industry has been swamped with a host of new pubs, all based on the same theme with little to tell between them. Now Bass has chosen to grow the O'Neill's name overseas where there is still room to exploit the brand and the competition is less fierce, rather than at home.

Bass has also identified a number of states in the US where it could open up bars. After its acquisition of the Holiday Inn hotel chain the group is prohibited from opening pubs in many American cities. However it is confident it will be allowed to set up a number of new sites across the Atlantic.

Bass's move follows a move by other large pub groups such as Scottish & Newcastle, who are also looking to Europe to provide a lucrative source of new business.

Bass also hopes to expand its brewing interests overseas. It is at present locked in a battle with rival producers in Czechoslovakia, but eventually hopes to expand its operations in Eastern Europe.

Bass still plans to invest heavily in growing its managed pub estate in the UK, having recently sold off its tenanted houses. It is looking to acquire hundreds of new sites to further expansion of chains such as Edwards and It's a Pile, its new student pub chain.

Bass has embarked on a radical shake up of its business over the last six months, culminating in the £1.8bn acquisition of Inter-Continental hotels. It now plans annual capital expenditure of £750m across the group to fund its pub expansion and the acquisition of hotels in Asia and the US.

Revenue to charge interest on late payment fines

By Andrew Verity

MORE than 670,000 self-employed taxpayers are to be charged interest on fines and surcharges as well as outstanding tax, after falling a month behind on January payments.

Interest of 9.5 per cent will be levied on the 5 per cent surcharge imposed on tax payments still outstanding by the end of February. A fine of £100 for missing the deadline for submitting tax returns, 31 January, will also incur interest.

The Inland Revenue is understood to be invoking statutory powers to impose interest on penalties which it has long had on paper, but has never used for this purpose. While the Revenue has always said that the 9.5 per cent charge would be levied on outstanding tax not paid by 31 January, accountants said the decision to impose it on fines and surcharges was unexpected.

Accountants said the Revenue was charging "interest on interest" in its efforts to reign in self-employed taxpayers who have failed

to comply with the new system of self-assessment.

They accuse the Revenue of using unnecessarily harsh measures.

Mavis Sargent, chairman of the tax committee of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, said: "This charge brings the Inland Revenue close to charging interest on interest. Clearly the Revenue is determined to bring defaulters into line. Although this further penalty may seem draconian, we would urge all taxpayers who have yet to settle their self-assessment bill to do so speedily. Otherwise they may risk ongoing penalties." The interest charge of 9.5 per cent will begin to take effect on 9 March, adding to the burden of fines and penalties already imposed on late payers by the Inland Revenue. In addition to a fine of £100 for missing the January deadline, a further fine of £100 can be levied if returns are still not submitted by the end of July.

The Revenue insists the system of self-assessment has performed well. But it admits that there have been glitches.

Lords to rule on jobs safeguard

By Michael Harrison

A TEST case begins today in the House of Lords which could alter the employment rights of thousands of workers but help save scores of businesses from being put into liquidation. Two employers intend to challenge the legislation governing employee protection when companies contract out services or dispose of businesses altogether.

Under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, it is illegal to change employment contracts of staff when businesses change hands, even if the workforce involved agrees to pay cuts and new terms and conditions. British Fu-

els and St Helens Borough Council are now seeking to reverse a Court of Appeal ruling upholding the right of employees to obtain compensation under the TUPE regulations.

In one case a children's home under the control of Lancashire County Council was transferred to St Helens Borough Council. The staff were dismissed and then offered new contracts, some on lower pay. Eighteen months later they successfully sued the council for the loss of pay suffered.

British Fuels is appealing to the Lords against a similar ruling which arose after it merged two businesses and reduced rates of pay for employees in one of the businesses.

China to shore up state banks

CHINA is planning to spend 270 billion yuan (\$32.7bn) on recapitalising its state-owned commercial banks in an attempt to stave off an Asian-style financial crisis. The government, which will sell treasury bonds to fund the move, hopes to lift public confidence in the banks and improve their international competitiveness. The recent

turmoil in Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia has raised fears of the fragility of the Chinese banking system. The World Bank estimated last year that 20 per cent of Chinese bank loans were bad. The bond sale seeks to raise more than China raised in the whole of 1997, when it sold bonds worth about 240 billion yuan.

HK calls for debt market to end crunch

By Stephen Vines
in Hong Kong

HONG KONG is pushing its neighbours to create an Asian debt market which would both help ease the current financial crisis and reverse the massive flow of Asian funds into United States Treasury bonds.

In an interview with *The Independent* Sir Donald Tsang, Hong Kong's Financial Secretary, said the idea was "highly supported" by all his Asian counterparts, although it had met its "reservations" from the United States.

Sir Donald said that as matters stood the bulk of the very considerable foreign reserves held by countries such as China, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong itself, were invested in US Treasury bonds. "This creates a mismatch," he explained, "we invest long term and then have to go to the United States to get short term help." This means that Asian countries get relatively low returns on their US investments but have to pay dearly to borrow from the Americans at times such as these when there is no other source of funds.

He is urging either the Asian Development Bank or the World Bank to float Asian bonds, preferably on the Hong Kong market, and pledged that "if they can come up with an instrument, I would buy it".

Sir Donald first put the idea to fellow Asian finance ministers last November, a month after the financial crisis started to make an impact. He described it as a "creative way" of helping to solve the liquidity crunch which is dragging down Asian currencies and stock markets.

The problem, as Sir Donald admits, is that now is a difficult time to raise money for Asian paper but he is convinced that when the crisis eases this idea will be "a runner".

Meanwhile Hong Kong is busy conducting its own post mortem examination on the lessons of the financial crisis, which have seen unsuccessful speculative attacks on the local currency, enormous increases in interest rates and some high profile corporate failures which have all contributed to an atmosphere of unease.

The results of this review will be made known later this month, says Sir Donald. It is likely to reveal that the Government has no intention of tampering with the currency board arrangements which maintain the Hong Kong Dollar at a fixed parity with the US Dollar. Sir Donald concedes that the present system is painful in as much as it necessitates high interest rates to protect the peg at times of pressure, but says that all other alternatives have more disadvantages than advantages.

The collapse of the financial conglomerate Peregrine and one smaller local finance



Sir Donald Tsang: Difficult time to raise money

house has persuaded the government that greater controls need to be imposed on finance houses attached to stock brokers. Sir Donald said that he has been concerned about this connection for some time but that now "is a good time to get their agreement" to stricter regulation over the way they handle investor's funds.

He is also looking to introduce measures which will stimulate "greater transparency" in equity markets.

However the review is unlikely to yield radical changes to the regulatory environment for Hong Kong's financial markets, which were recently given a clean bill of health in an International Monetary Fund report.

IN THE HIGH COURT
OF JUSTICE
No. 006157 of 1997
CHANCERY DIVISION
COMPANIES COURT
IN THE MATTER OF
ELEMENTIS PLC
(formerly Harrisons &
Croft plc)

and
IN THE MATTER OF
THE COMPANIES ACT 1985

NOTICE IS HEREBY
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Court of Justice (Chancery
Division) dated 23rd February
1998 confirming the reduction of
capital of Elementis plc (now
Elementis Holdings Limited) from
£200,000,000 to
£20,434,498.75p and the Minute
approved by the Court showing
with respect to the capital as
altered the several particulars
required by the above-mentioned
Act were registered by the
Registrar of Companies on 23rd
February 1998.

Dated the 2nd day of March
1998.

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Solicitors for the above-named
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GAVYN DAVIES



ON WHETHER
MONETARY
POLICY IS
TOO TIGHT

Are the central banks risking global deflation?

THERE has been a great deal of discussion recently in the financial markets about whether global monetary policy is too tight. This has been triggered by a series of different events - the recent decline in commodity and producer prices around the world; the increase in real short-term interest rates, triggered by declining price inflation; fears of outright deflation in Japan and the rest of Asia; and the contractionary impact of rising real exchange rates in the OECD economies. The fear among some analysts is that the global central banks may be inadvertently setting monetary conditions so tight that deflation becomes a genuine possibility.

Up until now, there has been very little evidence that global monetary conditions are too tight. The growth in real broad money in the major economies has been accelerating sharply in recent quarters, and it is now running at almost twice the rate of growth in real GDP. Narrow money aggregates are also showing robust and accelerating growth for the OECD economies. Furthermore, the rapid increases in leading indicators which we are observing in both the US and the EU certainly do not seem to imply that monetary conditions are overly restrictive.

Admittedly, it is true that real short term interest rates have risen quite markedly in the G6 economies in the past year. Nevertheless, the level of real short rates at present (2.5%) is still roughly 0.5% below the average for the previous decade, and the impact of any increases in real short rates has been more than offset by declines in real bond yields over the same period. The real 10 year bond yield in the G6 economies now stands at about 2.7%, which is more than one standard deviation below the 4.0% average which has been observed over the past 10 years.

The key question for the developed economies is whether these accommodative

readings for domestic monetary policy will be more than offset by the contractionary impact of appreciating real exchange rates. This question is, of course, best answered by looking at monetary conditions indicators (MCIs), which combine short-term interest rates, bond yields and exchange rates into a single index.

Up until now, the indices which have been published based on this methodology have suggested that OECD monetary conditions have not only eased very substantially in the last three years, but have attained levels in absolute terms which are towards the easiest end of their normal cyclical range. These indices have therefore offered no support to those analysts who have argued that global monetary conditions are too tight.

However, these MCIs have until now been based on standard trade weighted exchange rate indices (TWIs), as published for example by the Bank of England and other central banks. These indices have typically excluded emerging market currencies, which is of course potentially very misleading. In order to solve this problem, Stephen Hull of Goldman Sachs has now calculated comprehensive exchange rate indices for all of the major currencies, including all of the relevant emerging market currencies. Because of the recent collapse in Asian currencies, these new indices have appreciated much more than the old ones, and this implies that monetary conditions in the developed economies have tightened much more than was previously believed.

In particular, based on the old or conventional exchange rate indices, the MCI in the United States stands only 0.7% tighter than its 1987-95 average. By contrast, on the new exchange rate index, US monetary conditions are estimated to be 2.5% tighter than average, and - more worryingly - they are now tighter than at any time over the past ten years.

No doubt some analysts will argue that this indicates that monetary conditions in the G3 are unnecessarily tight, and that there should therefore be a bias towards renewed easing by the Federal Reserve and other central banks.

This assessment will be further strengthened by the fact that the Taylor Rule (a mechanistic way of determining the optimal level of short-term interest rates via a relationship with output gaps and inflation) now indicates that monetary policy in the G3 economies is too tight.

As can be seen from the accompanying graph, the recent decline in inflation across the developed world has reduced the optimal level of short rates implied by the Taylor Rule very significantly. Actual short rates are now well above their optimal level in both the US and Japan, while in Europe actual short rates are about optimal.

For the OECD as a whole, the Taylor Rule suggests that the current level of short rates is almost 100 basis points too high, which is an unusually large discrepancy. This will undoubtedly add strength to calls for interest rate cuts in the major nations in the months ahead, especially in the United States. However, there are a series of arguments which point in the other direction, and which the central banks need to take into account. These are the following.

First, the main reason why monetary conditions in the major economies have tightened in the last twelve months stems from the collapse in Asian currencies.

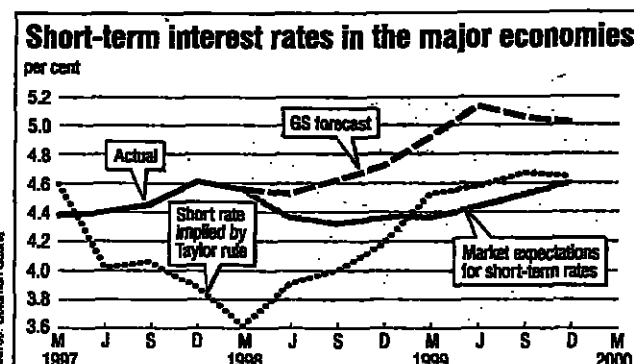
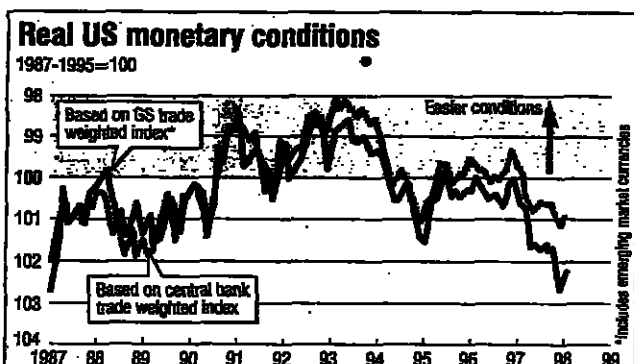
Obviously, to the extent that the shift in MCIs for developed countries is triggered by a change in exchange rates, we would expect this to be offset by an easing in MCIs in the rest of the world (where currencies have depreciated), leaving monetary con-

ditions for the entire globe approximately unchanged.

Second, to the extent that the recent collapse in the real exchange rates of the Asian crisis economies is a temporary event, the accompanying tightening in OECD monetary policy will also be temporary. It may not be appropriate to ease domestic monetary policy in the developed economies in order to offset this temporary factor. This is particularly the case in the United States, where virtually all indicators of domestic demand currently remain strong. As Alan Greenspan recently argued in his Humphrey-Hawkins testimony to Congress, the tightening in real monetary conditions which has occurred in the United States in the past twelve months was "not inadvertent" - i.e. the Fed has intended to put a brake on the economy to offset the strengthening in domestic demand, and does not now sympathise with calls to reverse this intended policy tightening.

Third, although real monetary conditions have tightened in the OECD in the last 12-month period, the impact of this may have been offset by two countervailing forces - an improvement in the terms of trade for the developed economies as oil prices have declined, and a sharp increase in the value of global stockmarkets, notably in the US and the EU. Goldman Sachs has recently added stockmarket valuations into its MCI calculations, and this eliminates most if not all of the "monetary tightening" which has been triggered by the rising dollar in the last 12 months.

Ultimately, the proof of this particular pudding will be in the eating. For as long as domestic demand indicators in the US and EU remain robust, and leading activity indicators continue to rise, then the central banks will probably resist the temptation to reduce domestic interest rates. And they will be entirely justified in doing so.



Allied backs off Dewar's bid

DRINKS and pubs giant Allied Domecq has withdrawn from the bidding war for Dewar's, the whisky brand which Grand Metropolitan and Guinness were forced to put up for sale in the wake of their merger, which formed Diageo. Allied was not prepared to pay more than \$600m for the brand, which is America's most popular whisky, but the asking price has risen much higher, and the business is now expected to fetch around \$800m. Seagram, the Canadian drinks group, is also reported to have pulled out of the auction, leaving Pernod Ricard and Bacardi as the frontrunners.

Astec investors go to court

MINORITY shareholders in Astec (BSR), the electronics group which is fighting off a takeover bid from majority shareholder Emerson Electric, will embark on their long-awaited legal action this week. The institutional investors accuse Emerson of acting with unfair prejudice for attempting to remove three executive directors from Astec's board and cease dividend payments. The shareholders had delayed their legal action to give Emerson a chance to open up a dialogue, but no discussions have been held. They have received the support of the Association of British Insurers, which said: "It is important that the rights of minority shareholders are fully preserved."

Stores risk big bill for home shopping

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

SUPERMARKETS which introduce home delivery services for customers risk increasing their costs without gaining a long-term competitive advantage, according to a report published today by the retail consultancy Corporate Intelligence.

It says that while the first companies to introduce such schemes enjoy short-term gains

these quickly disappear as rivals copy them. The report also warns that while home shopping is likely to prove popular such schemes mean that supermarket operators risk cannibalising sales in their own superstores. "A drop in the number of store visits would also mean the stores missing out on the lucrative impulse buys which they have courted so assiduously," warns Corporate Intelligence's Robert Clarke.

Start-up companies which

have no stores do not face this conundrum and have been growing rapidly, according to the report. It adds that Food Ferry, which started offering grocery home delivery in London in 1990, saw sales grow by 20 per cent to £1.3m last year. Sales at Flanagan's, a south London-based home delivery company with links to Sainsbury's, passed the £6m mark last year.

Tesco and Sainsbury's have been the most aggressive in

home delivery. Both offer internet ordering and home delivery in certain areas. The delivery charge is £4-£5. Somerfield is offering free home delivery from 30 stores for transactions over £25 and within a five mile radius. Iceland is now offering free home delivery in all outlets on orders over £25. Many of the supermarkets are testing schemes whereby customers order their goods by phone, fax or internet and then collect the shopping from the store.

BTR close to £1.5bn sale of packaging business

BTR, the reformed conglomerate, is believed to be close to selling its packaging division to Owens Illinois, the US glass manufacturer, for up to £1.5bn. Owens has long been the front runner in the race to buy

the business, which BTR put up for sale last year as part of its attempt to become a lean engineering group. However, the sale is thought to have been held up by competition concerns. A successful sale would be time-

ly for Ian Strachan, BTR's embattled chief executive, who will present the company's annual results to the City on Thursday. The strong pound and turmoil in emerging markets is expected to trim profits

to £1.1bn. However, the proceeds of the disposal would give BTR enough financial firepower to spend up to £1bn on its long-promised share buy-back programme.

Peter Thal Larsen

Software group joins Aim

ANOTHER software company is to join the Aim market this month as VI Group, a leading designer and distributor of Computer Aided Design and Manufacture (CAD/CAM), announced its flotation. VI specialises in software for the mechanical engineering sector.

GM enters mortgage world

A SUBSIDIARY of General Motors, the US car giant, has entered the UK mortgage market. GMAC Residential Funding Corporation will today buy Birmingham Midlands Mortgage Services, the division of the building society which handles business from brokers, for an undisclosed sum. The purchase will create a new business, RFC Mortgage Services.

Skills shortage hits firms

BRITISH companies are planning to increase pay scales and invest in training in response to growing skills shortages - especially in the engineering and information technology sectors. Over half of the businesses surveyed by 3i, the venture capital firm, said they suffered from skills shortages and 22 per cent of the firms said the problem was more serious than competition or the strong pound.

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Resolutions to be taken at the meeting may include a resolution authorising the liquidator to recover the costs of preparing the Statement of Affairs and covering the meeting of the Creditors.
Creditors wishing to vote at the meeting must lodge a statement of their claims with the liquidator at the Registered Office of the Company at 16/17 Broadway Road, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 4EF before the meeting, a Statement of Affairs and covering the meeting of the Creditors.
In accordance with Section 98(2)(b) of the Act, the names and addresses of the Company's Creditors will be available for inspection from 24th March 1998 at 16/17 Broadway Road, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 4EF on the two business days preceding the date of the meeting, and will be available for inspection during the hours of 10.00am and 4.00pm.
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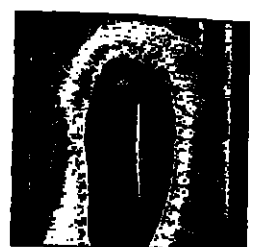


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Barred: the best person for the job



Asian barristers often don't get work because solicitors – even Asian ones – pander to the prejudice of their clients. Romasa Butt recounts her own story of fighting against racism

STUDIES in America have shown that Asian children often do better at school because they come from a culture which believes that you have to work hard to be successful. That ethos has recently been satirised by such television programmes as *Goodness Gracious Me*, co-written by Meera Syal, who was made an MBE in the New Year's Honours list. Fans of the programme will recall various sketches depicting Asian "over-achievers". Some of them are even going to Oxford at the age of nine! So we are told that there are a disproportionate number of Asians running around with trunks full of degrees and professional qualifications. One may ask where they all are when we look at who occupies the top positions in society.

Let's wind the clock back to graduation with a bunch of fresh-faced Asian graduates armed with their degrees. What do we do now, says one idealistic and naive over-achiever? Cash in on them, says another over-achiever. So they go off in search of the best jobs. One of them ends up at the Bar and thinks, "right, now the world is my oyster – we've all heard that barristers earn a sackful of money. Fast forward to 10 years later. Female over-achiever arrives at chambers, and is told by her clerk that he has just received a call from a solicitor who wants to instruct counsel for a complicated fraud trial at the Old Bailey. Faithful clerk says he thinks Asian female over-achiever is the ideal choice based on her knowledge, experience and proven track record. Faithful clerk phones solicitor and puts forward ideal choice and recounts her success rate etc. Solicitor is impressed and asks for name of counsel and realises that faithful clerk is recommending a female who does not brandish a pukka English name. Solicitor says that she will not do as the client has given her strict instructions that he wants a male brandishing a pukka English name.

Although the client reserves the inalienable right to choose counsel it cannot be based on any stipulation which is contrary to the law, ie on grounds of sex, creed or colour. Faithful clerk asks solicitor the reasons for the stipulation by the client. He is told that the client is of the view that the

case is far too serious and weighty a matter for a female and that he stands a better chance of being acquitted if the person representing him is "white". So, Asian female over-achiever is dumped in favour of a male, brandishing a pukka English name with less experience.

Anyone who has done jury service will tell you that the client's fears are completely unfounded and that the whole supposition is chaff. The fact that counsel must wear a wig and gown in court ensures that you are, as counsel, sexless and colourless.

So what does she do? She has a number of options. She can forget it and accept the fact that she has been defeated by good old-fashioned ignorance as there will always be people like that and hope that not everyone is like that, or she can do something positive about it: she could get her clerk to call the solicitor and remind him/her that it is their duty not to pander to such requests as it is clearly contrary to the law.

In the case of a weak solicitor this will probably result in the client going to another firm who will pander to his request. In any event the weak solicitor will have money reasons for wanting to pander to the client's request. A better solution for all concerned is to take the bull by the horns. This has been proven to work. The faithful clerk arranges a conference with the ideal counsel, in this case the Asian female, when the client's fears will be allayed and he/she will realise how

inadequate his/her ill-conceived preconceptions are. In a society which is driven by competition so that only the fittest survive, there has to be a presumption that all are competing on a level playing field. To the author's mind, although the above scenario is a real one, it is impossible to take part in the race if your arms are tied behind your back and your legs tied together. It's a bit like spending years training for the Olympics only to find that when you are at the starting line for the 100 metres hurdles you can't jump over the first hurdle because your arms and legs are tied together.

The reason why this particular scenario is of interest is because the solicitor and client concerned are Asian! This new glass ceiling has been put there by Asians who don't want to be represented by fellow



Smashing the Asian glass ceiling. Millie (Armita Dhiri) from 'This Life'

Asians because of preconceptions of ability based on sex and colour. This is not always true in all areas of the law but is felt increasingly as the cases become more challenging, with greater sums of money involved and inevitably they are of greater complexity. These areas are traditionally the bastions of the male species.

Sadly this is not the first time that the author has encountered this. Less than 12 months earlier she was representing two defendants charged with a serious offence. One was Caucasian and the other Asian. The Caucasian wanted to be represented by a male and the Asian by a Caucasian. Physically, counsel represented the most undesirable package: female and non-Caucasian.

Fortunately, the solicitor did his job and stuck to his guns and a conference was arranged with counsel on the basis that I was the appropriate person for the case. The Caucasian client saw sense and I represented him but the Asian client still preferred to be represented by a Caucasian. For reasons I won't go into I could repre-

sent only one of them and the Caucasian chose me and the Asian client was represented by a male.

On the first day of the trial the Asian defendant realised that he had made a mistake in the choice of counsel when he was unable to marshal all the facts and files. The adage, "What you want isn't always what you need," seems appropriate. During the trial, what the jury took on board was my preparation, not the fact that I was female or the colour of my skin. What is sad is that during the trial the Asian defendant came to me and said that he had made a grave mistake. It was a mistake which ultimately may affect his liberty, though of course by then it was far too late for it to be rectified.

It is time to untie those arms and legs put there by preconceptions. I am very fortunate to have the full support of my clerk and head of chambers, who encourage the breakdown of such silly notions.

Romasa Butt is a practising barrister in the chambers of the Rt Hon Denzil Davies

Partnership plans that don't add up

Plans for new limited liability partnerships must move towards the US model, says Jim Gemmell

LIMITED liability is an issue that has been exercising the minds of many partners in both legal and accountancy firms as the risk of commercial failure has become all too real for some practices.

Last February the outgoing government published a consultation paper, "Limited Liability Partnerships – A new form of business association for professions". The consultation period ended in May. It is understood that the Government has plans to include references to legislation on LLPs in the next Queen's Speech. No doubt this will discharge the Labour Party's manifesto commitment to the provision of adequate protection to the professions through incorporation.

The push for change has come more from the accountants, and in particular the Big Six, who have found it increasingly difficult to obtain sufficient indemnity cover at an affordable cost. However, the issue is equally relevant to legal firms, especially in the current climate of debate and discontent about the Solicitors' Indemnity Fund.

The current law on joint and several liability does not discriminate between the relative culpability of the clients and the professionals; professional life has become much more competitive.

The recession of the early Nineties caused headlines not seen before in the profession – many partners entered individual voluntary arrangements for the benefit of their creditors and there were several "fire sale mergers", plus a few well-documented bankruptcies. Until the introduction of the LLP, the only protection from commercial risk is incorporation.

Historically, the professional bodies were set up under an Act of Parliament or by Royal Charter with the principal objectives of serving the public interest. The partnership model has worked tolerably well in that context over many years, with an ethos based upon balanced advice and fine judgements, not as a platform for decisions solely concerning the financial advantage of the partners. That is a reason why the good partner is valued by his clients. Hence, growth rates, profits before tax and earnings are valued by his clients. Hence, growth rates, profits before tax and earnings are valued by his clients. Hence, growth rates, profits before tax and earnings are valued by his clients.

The planned UK model for the LLP, however, is unattractive to the professions. While the shareholder of a limited liability company is exposed only to the extent of the share capital, the limited liability partner is to be required to put up a guarantee of between £25,000 and £100,000 per partner. Furthermore, any excessive earnings will be subjected to a claw-

back in the event of insolvency. Partnerships will also be required to produce audited accounts. In comparison incorporation seems almost idyllic.

The situation in the United States is very different. The law on joint and several liability in respect of claims was changed and a system of proportionate liability introduced last year. Almost all the states now have limited liability partnerships. To become an LLP, the partnership simply files a statement that it had become an LLP with the requisite authorities and advises clients and suppliers. It must make sure that the letters LLP are printed after its name on all stationery and make appropriate press announcements. For the US LLP there is no minimum capital requirement, no financial disclosure and no claw-back or guarantees.

US professionals can, of course, still be sued individually under their equivalent to the partners' own negligence but, otherwise, the US LLP structure means that the partners' private assets are secure from claims on the LLP. The UK LLP too, will not protect the negligent partner.

Despite the litigious nature of US business, the balance of advantage seems to have moved significantly in the direction of the US professional. The UK LLP proposals need to be rethought. The rethink should concentrate on two key areas.

There would be significantly more onerous liabilities upon insolvency for partners in LLPs compared with those which apply to the shareholders in limited liability companies. In addition, there is no need for clawbacks and guarantees – a fixed minimum capital is all that is required.

Also, the disclosure of partners' income could be damaging to firms or for those which have a below-average expectation of reward or for firms with unusual profit cycles of trend and also for those with exceptional results – balance sheet disclosure should be sufficient for third party needs.

The way forward should be to find a balance between the DTI proposals and the US position, which is attractive to the members of the LLP and to those who do business with it. Without a significant improvement to the proposals, there is a real danger that the commercial threats to partners and partnerships will deprive the professions of future talent. In the absence of a satisfactory UK solution, there will be a continuing consideration of the possibilities of Jersey, Delaware and New York. Alternatively, firms will be forced to incorporate with a structure which in most cases will be far from suitable.

James Gemmell is Chairman of Horwath Clark Whitehill, Chartered Accountants. He was also Chairman of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland's Working Party on Auditors Liability.

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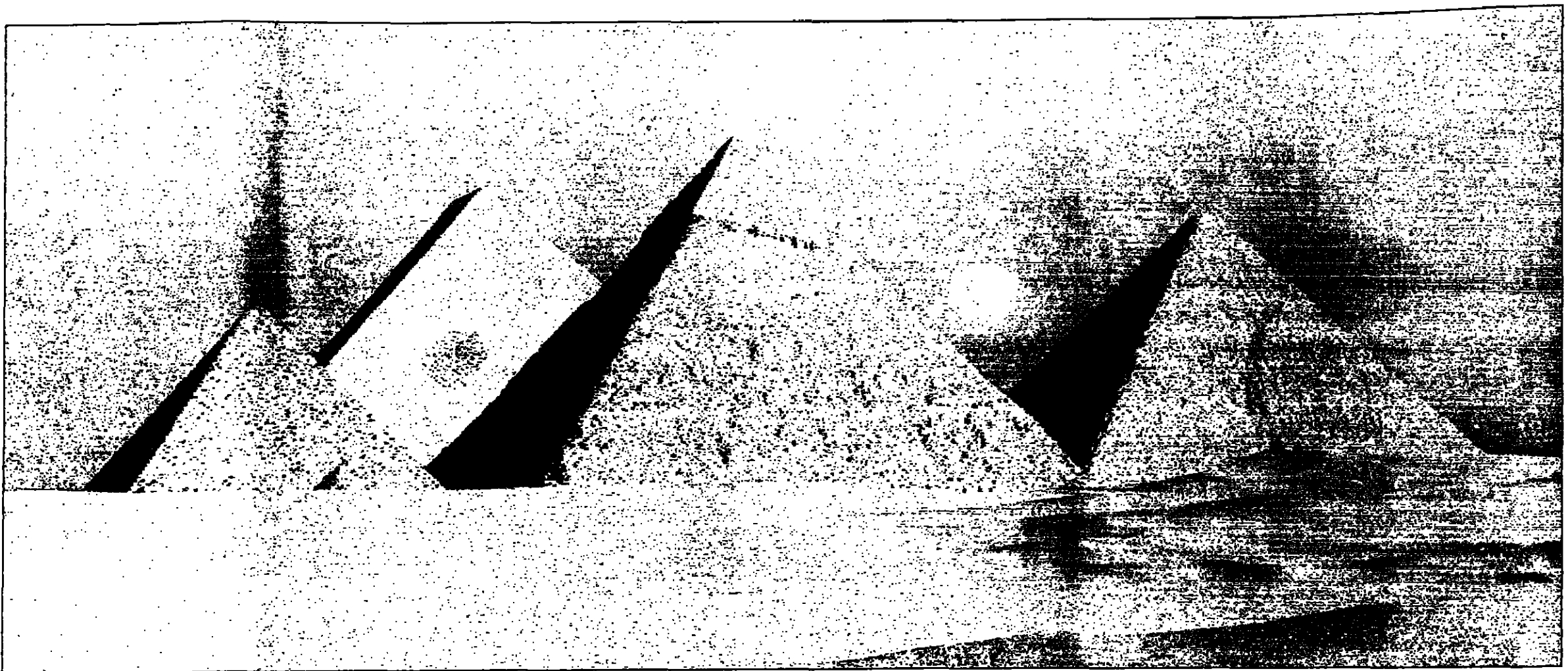
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Power of the poster reveals a bigger picture



How times change: A poster campaign for Benson & Hedges in 1977 by the advertising firm Collet, Dickenson, Pearce; below left, a poster by Great Northern Railway to promote trips to Skegness; and Savile Lumley's 1915 image to help recruitment in the First World War

Courtesy of V&A

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From Toulouse Lautrec to Saatchi as exhibition hails 120-year history

By Kate Watson-Smythe

THE V&A is to open an exhibition dedicated to the power of the poster and will feature some of the most famous images of modern times - some of them in full size - offering an overview of the social trends of the last 120 years.

The exhibition will include posters from Toulouse Lautrec to Saatchi and Saatchi, and from "My Goodness My Guinness" to the notorious "Hello Boys" Wonderbra campaign.

The posters, many of them international, are taken from the museum's collection of more than 10,000 originals.

A spokesman for the museum said: "The poster is a very important art form and the exhibition will show its strengths and what makes it such a powerful medium of design, publicity and persuasion."

The exhibition will be divided into three sections, Pleasure and Leisure, Protest and Propaganda and Commerce and Communication.

It will examine their role in society: from children and teenagers plastering them all over their walls in an effort to stamp their own personality on a bedroom to companies' reliance on huge billboards to draw attention to their products.

The performing arts have inspired some of the greatest poster designs such as Lautrec's paintings for the cafés of Mont-

martre and those for the London music halls. It was drawings such as these, dating back to the 1870s, which first prompted posters to be hailed as street art.

But the poster has also been used as an instrument of persuasion and governments and pressure groups have used it throughout the twentieth century to inform and provoke. Some of the earliest examples were Savile Lumley's "Daddy, What did YOU do in the Great War?" and Fougasse's "Careless Talk Costs Lives". More recently Saatchi and Saatchi have produced controversial election posters such as "New Labour-

New Danger" for the Tories.

The poster is viewed as an effective and inexpensive means of protest and has been used to further many causes from votes for women to animal welfare and ban the bomb.

Perhaps the most sophisticated use of posters is in advertising. One of the most memorable in recent times was the series of posters for Benson & Hedges cigarettes. But some of the most controversial have proved the most successful, including Wonderbra and Benetton.

The exhibition opens on 2 April and runs until 26 July.



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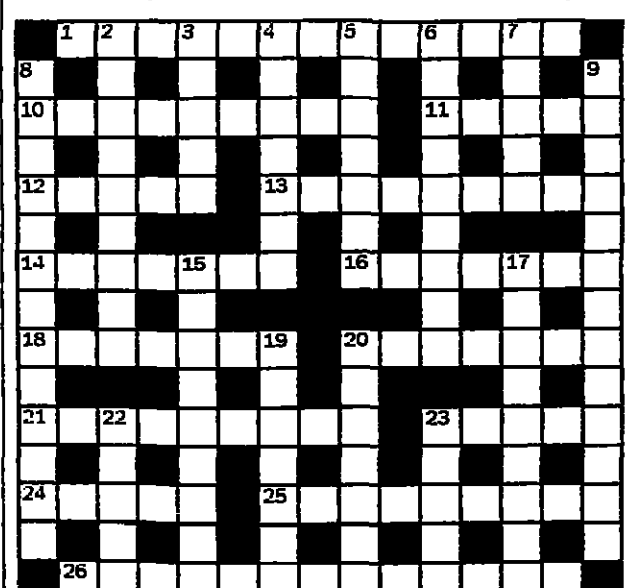
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10 Endurance shown by one in difficulty (9)
11 Refuse to be extravagant (5)
12 Increase level we're told (5)
13 Extra try before Dutch get caught (9)
14 Light shades are works of art (7)
- DOWN**
- 2 Self-possessed young man? (9)
3 Make one measure energy (5)
4 Heavy metal turning up in load (7)
5 Decline to disagree in speech (7)
6 Dogged reporter? (9)
7 Opera tenor gets acting award right away (5)
8 Pointed to medical group's dishonesty (5,8)
9 Sensitive to proposed housing centre (6-7)
15 Cricket teams join drug society to get a break (9)
17 Neil gets confused with an odd plant species (9)
19 Directions given to leave nothing on the grass (7)
20 Be able to work with brilliant star (7)
22 English duke triumph over Northumbrian king (5)
23 Fly out of line of the sun (5)

- 24 Port in Mexico we sailed to (5)
25 Horrible soldiers beat small number held inside (9)
26 He's so ignorant of development that's low cost (2,1,10)